God
The Teacher
of
Mankind

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GOD THE TEACHER

OF

MANKIND:

A PLAIN, COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

GRACE AND THE SACRAMENTS:

BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, EXTREME UNCTION, HOLY ORDERS
AND MATRIMONY.

BY

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A CERTAIN pilgrim travelled by night through a vast forest, and came at last to a rural chapel. He entered to pray, and soon fell asleep. On awaking toward daybreak, he noticed above the altar a painted window. He felt indignant, and said to himself: "What a miserable dauber, who has spoiled the window by such coarse and dark colors! Only a blind or an insane man would paint a window in that style." By and by the warm and bright sun arose. The pilgrim looked again at the window. Oh, what a wondrous change! How the colors glowed like purple and gold in the bright sunshine! He saw a beautiful painting tenderly expressive, so fresh, so life-like! It represented the burning bush glowing with celestial light. There was Moses prostrate on the ground; there, in the green meadow, were the snow-white sheep, and over all was the clear blue sky. The pilgrim's soul was filled with wonder and delight. An inner voice whispered to him: "God's dealings with the world often seem to short-sighted man quite dark and unintelligible. But the first ray of the eternal Sun on the day of doom shall show to all how wise and just and loving is God in all his works."

This fault-finding pilgrim represents those who easily search into matters too high, into the hidden ways and secret judgments of God. "Why," they ask, "is this man left thus, and that other raised to so high a degree of grace? Why is this person so much lowered, whilst that other is so much exalted? Why does not God distribute his graces to all in the same measure?"

Things that exceed all human understanding should be let alone. The judgments of God are to be feared, but not to be scrutinized. To possess the grace of God is much better than to dive into the incomprehensible mysteries of grace. To humble ourselves for having so often abused divine grace, is more profitable than to ask unprofitable questions about how it is distributed. To make ourselves more and more worthy of his grace by true penance and humble, persevering prayer, is more pleasing to God than to lose our time in useless reflections on predestination. To say with the prophet, "Thou art just, O Lord! and thy judgments are right, and justified in themselves," is wiser than to write subtle theological disquisitions; to utter opinions that were never taught by the fathers and doctors and martyrs of the Church, and to explain things in such a way that others become disturbed in mind.

The principal object in explaining the Catholic doctrine of grace should be, to show clearly that our salvation from first to last is the gift of God; that, as God is the beginning and the end of all things, so he is, of our salvation; that, without the help of his grace, we cannot do anything toward putting ourselves into the state of grace, performing good works worthy of heaven, and persevering in the grace of God; that his grace begins the work of our salvation, continues it, and also finishes it on condition that we coöperate with his grace; that, were God not to finish the work of our salvation, it would never be finished, it would rather be reversed; that God has given to every man the great means of prayer by which he may obtain his grace and

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persevere to the end. This great truth should be constantly impressed upon the mind and heart of the people, in such a manner, however, that the answer given by an actor to a preacher may not be applicable to the teacher of religion. "How is it," said a certain preacher to an actor, "that I cannot secure the attention and sympathy of my audience in matters which most deeply concern them, whilst you so easily succeed in fascinating your audience in matters which are only fictitious?" "Why," said the actor, "I speak of fictions as if they were realities, whilst you speak of realities as if they were fictions."

If we would wish that, in explaining religion, this answer should not be applicable to us, we must make a constant study of religion, especially of the truths most difficult to be explained. It is by constant study of religion that we acquire a great facility of illustrating it and making it interesting to all classes; that we become "like a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old." (Matt. xiii, 52.) As a father of a family uses different means to support his family, so, too, the good teacher of religion presents Catholic truths in different ways, in order to make his fellow-men understand them the better, love them the more ardently, and live up to them the more faithfully. He uses all kinds of parables, similes, and stories, that bring those truths into clearer light, and impress them more deeply upon the minds and hearts of those whom he instructs. "He bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old;" that is to say, he uses things already known, in order that what is new and unintelligible may be better understood. He expresses sublime doctrines, in language so simple, that a child without effort can understand them.

All learning requires time and labor. Why, then, should we not use time and labor to acquire a thorough knowledge of the truths of our religion, and to make the most important of all subjects as interesting as possible? The case might be a little different, says an anonymous writer, were we living in a country in which the influence of good homes, and the spirit and tradition of the place, are sufficient to make young people practically acquainted with, at least, all that is necessary to salvation. They would then naturally fall into the Catholic ways and sentiments of those among whom they live. But it is not so in this irreligious and infidel country. The traditions of this country are against Catholic feeling and practice. The influences of home are often evil influences. Hence our youth have to learn the knowledge and practice of religion from their teachers, or very often they do not learn it at all. After the protection of God's grace, there is no better preservative against infidelity, vice, and corruption, than a thorough knowledge of our religion. If we are able to give the reason of the faith that is in us, "we shall no longer, as children, be carried about with every wind of doctrine." (Eph. iv, 14.)

CHAPTER II.

ON GRACE.

(*According to the Doctrine of St. Alphonsus.*)

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that, when Herod saw that he pleased the Jews by persecuting the apostles, "he proceeded to take up Peter also. And when he had apprehended him he cast him into prison, delivering him to four files of soldiers to be kept, intending, after the pasch, to bring him forth to the people. Peter, therefore, was kept in prison. But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by him: and a light shined in the room; and he, striking Peter on the side, raised him up, saying: Arise quickly. And the chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said to him: Gird thyself, and put on thy sandals. And he did so. And he said to him: Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And going out he followed him, and he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. And passing through the first and the second ward, they came to the iron gate that leadeth to the city, which of itself opened to them. And going out, they passed on through one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And Peter, coming to himself, said: Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And considering, he came to the house of Mary, . . . where many were gathered together and praying." (Acts, xii.)

This history of the wonderful deliverance of St. Peter by an angel of light, is a good illustration of the Catholic doctrine of grace. Herod represents Satan, and Peter represents every individual of mankind. Herod did not cease to persecute the head of the Church. Satan has never ceased to persecute mankind. Herod cast Peter into a dark prison, to bring him forth to the Jewish people. Satan has cast mankind into the dark prison of sin, to bring them forth to his companions in hell. Herod bound Peter with chains. Satan bound all mankind with the chains of their passions. Herod delivered Peter to four files of soldiers who should keep him and make escape impossible. Satan places a strong guard around every man,—a strong guard, namely, evil spirits, bad, false doctrines, and evil examples of wicked companions, that they may keep him captive in sin. Peter slept in a dark prison. By the fall of our first parents man's intellect became greatly darkened, his will extremely weakened and strongly inclined to evil, and his soul was sleeping in the frightful darkness of sin. From that time man was blind as to the supernatural happiness for which he had been created, and as to the means of reaching it. Peter, of himself, was unable to rid himself of his chains and escape from the prison. The sinner, of himself, is unable to free himself from the chains of his sins, from the darkness of his intellect, from the weakness of his will, and from his blindness as to his eternal happiness and the means of reaching it.

"But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God" for Peter's safety and deliverance. If the sinner prays to God without ceasing for his eternal salvation and deliverance from all obstacles to his eternal happiness, the Lord, according to promise, will not fail to hear his prayer. In his infinite wisdom and mercy he will provide for him means by which he may recover the friendship of God. And the angel made " the chains of Peter fall off from his hands." The grace of God disposes the sinner for deliverance from the chains of his sins, and for the return to God's friendship.

"And the angel said to Peter: Gird thyself, and put on thy sandals. And he did so." The angel performed for Peter what Peter could not perform. Peter could not make the angel come down from heaven and light his prison. In like manner, it is not in the power of the sinner to make God come to him, enlighten his mind, and raise him up by means of faith, hope, and charity. All this is the free, gratuitous gift of God's infinite mercy.

The angel came to Peter whilst he was asleep. Such a favor could not have been expected by the apostle. In like manner, the grace of God comes and enlightens the sinner whilst he is, as it were, asleep in sin and unbelief, to show more clearly that it is bestowed quite gratuitously, and without the least merit on the part of the sinner.

" And behold an angel of the Lord stood by him (Peter), and a light shined in the room." An angel, that is, the grace of God, must come and stand by the sinner, and its light must shine into the chamber of his soul, that he may see his misery and the danger of being condemned to eternal torments.

" And he (the angel), striking Peter on the side, raised him up, saying: Arise quickly." The grace of God must strike the sinner on the side; that is, it must fill the sinner with great fear of God's justice and of hell; it must raise him, that is, inspire him with confidence in God's mercy, and with hope for the pardon of his sins. This confident hope will make him hear, as it were, the encouraging voice saying, "Arise quickly:" arise from your state of sin, leave your spiritual captivity, and return to God's friendship. But the angel did not do for Peter what Peter himself was able to do. He therefore told him to gird himself and put on his sandals. And Peter did so. He was free not to do so. In like manner, God wishes the sinner to do what his grace has enabled him to do. God offers him the grace of faith, hope, and charity, saying: Gird yourself with this grace. Here I have for you the sandals of sorrow and humility; put them on, and prepare yourself for receiving still greater gifts. The sinner, however, is left perfectly free to accept the grace of God or to reject it.

"And the angel said to Peter: Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And going out he followed him." When the sinner, by faith, hope, charity, and contrition, is prepared to receive God's grace, the Lord says to him: Cast thy garment about thee by means of baptism,—the garment of my grace and friendship, and follow me, by keeping my commandments. As Peter was free to follow or not to follow the angel who was leading him out of prison into the city of Jerusalem, so the sinner always remains free to follow or not to follow this grace of God, which is leading him out of his spiritual captivity into the city of God's children: "And Peter knew not that it was true which was done by the angel." In like manner, it often happens that many a sinner who has been converted by the grace of God, does not at first know and understand that his conversion has been brought about by the grace of God.

" And passing through the first and the second ward, they came to the iron gate that leadeth to the city, which of itself opened to them." When the sinner has passed the first ward, that is, through the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, and then through the second ward, that is, baptism or penance, he comes to the iron gate, that is, the practice of the Catholic religion, which is the narrow gate to the heavenly city of Jerusalem.

" The iron gate of itself opened to them." This iron gate was for Peter the last obstacle to the recovery of his liberty. He had no means to surmount this obstacle. The angel of the Lord, therefore, opened the gate for him. The practice of the Catholic religion is difficult for human nature. This difficulty is so great, that man of himself can never overcome it. The angel of the Lord (the grace of Almighty God) must always assist him in the compliance with his religious duties, in the performance of good works; it must, as it were, open the iron gate for him—that is, render the practice of religion sweet and easy.

" And going out, they passed on through one street." The angel of the Lord leads Peter through one street; he does not leave him until he sees him perfectly safe. The one narrow street for the just man to travel is that of a truly Christian life. That he may not be lost in this street, the angel of the Lord, the grace of God, must lead and assist him until he is perfectly safe in heaven.

" And immediately the angel departed from him." The grace of God may be forfeited by sin; it leaves the just man as soon as he has the misfortune to commit a mortal sin. To preserve himself from such a misfortune, the just man needs a special grace, called the grace of perseverance, which enables him to remain faithful to the Lord until death. Then it is that, like St. Peter, he will come to himself, and exclaim with him: "Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent his angel,"—his grace to make me see and walk on the road to heaven,—" and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod,"—out of the hands of the devil, of the wicked world, and of corrupt nature,—" and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews,"—that is, from all the expectation of the evil spirits, of wicked companions, and of my own tyrannical passions.

"And considering, Peter came to the house of Mary, where many were gathered together and praying." The reward granted to Peter for having followed the angel, was the recovery of his liberty, and the exceedingly great pleasure of being again united, in the house of Mary, to the holy Christians of the city of Jerusalem. In the heavenly city of Jerusalem, the house of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all the faithful servants of the Lord will be rewarded for having obeyed the inspirations of grace and performed good works: their reward will be the most excellent of liberties,—that of enjoying the gift of impeccability, and the unspeakable pleasure of being inseparably united to God and all his angels and saints for ever and ever. Thus the salvation of man, from the beginning to the end, is God's gift, united with the coöperation of man. Let us now explain all these points by following the questions of the Catechism.

NECESSITY OF GRACE.

§ I.—WHAT WE OF OURSELVES CAN DO.

1. Can we of ourselves keep the commandments?
No; we need the grace of God to keep them.

Of ourselves we can do only what is not above our natural strength. Whenever we are to do something above our natural strength, we need the help of another. Man is endowed with great natural gifts,—with the gifts of understanding, will, and memory. By means of these gifts, man can do great things: he can learn languages, build churches, palaces, great cities, steamboats, railroads; he can count days, dates, distances, and money. By the natural power of his reason, man can understand various kinds of truths about this world, about human society, about the realms of space, about matter, about the soul. By his natural reason, man can inquire, argue, and draw conclusions, about religious truth. His thoughts and words, however, about religious truths will not extend beyond mere reasoning.

Dr. Newman tells us that, some years ago, there was much talk in the world of a man of science, who was said to have found out a new planet. How did he find it out? Did he watch night after night, wearily and perseveringly, in the chill air, through the tedious course of the starry heavens, for what he might find there, till at length, by means of some powerful glass, he discovered, in the dim distance, this unexpected addition to our planetary system?

Far from it. It is said that he sat at his ease in his library, and made calculations on paper in the daytime; and thus, without looking once up at the sky, he determined, from what was already known of the sun and the planets, of their number, their positions, their motions, and their influences, that, in addition to them all, there must be some other body in that very place where he said it would be found, if astronomers did but turn their instruments upon it. Here was a man who read the heavens, not with eyes, but by reason. In like manner, reason and conscience may lead the natural man to discover, and, in a measure, pursue, objects which are, properly speaking, supernatural and divine. The natural reason is able, from the things which are seen, from the voice of tradition, from the existence of the soul, and from the necessity of the case, to infer the existence of God.

A man without eyes may talk about forms and colors. A blind man may pick up a good deal of information of various kinds, and be very conversant with the objects of sight, though he does not see. He may be able to talk about them fluently, and may be fond of doing so; he may even talk of seeing as if he really saw, till he almost seems to pretend to the faculty of sight. He speaks of heights and distances and directions, and the dispositions of places, and shapes and appearances, as naturally as other men; and yet he is not duly aware of his own pitiable privation. How does this come about? It is partly because he hears what other men say about these things, and he is able to imitate them, and partly because he cannot help reasoning upon the things he hears and drawing conclusions from them; and thus he comes to think that he knows what he does not know at all.

Now, this will explain the way in which the natural man is able partly to understand, and still more to speak upon, supernatural subjects. There is a large floating body of Catholic truth in the world. It comes down by tradition from age to age; it is carried forward by preaching and profession from one generation to another, and is poured about into all quarters of the world. It is found in fulness and purity in the Church alone; but portions of it, larger or smaller, escape far and wide, and penetrate into places which have never been under the teaching of divine grace. Now, men may take up and profess these scattered truths, merely because they fall in with them. These fragments of revelation, such as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, or of the Atonement, are the religion which they have been taught in their childhood; and therefore they retain them, and profess them, and repeat them, without really *seeing* them as the Catholic sees them, but as receiving them merely by word of mouth, from imitation of others. In this way it oftens happens that a man, external to the Catholic Church, writes sermons and instructions, draws up and arranges devotions, or composes hymns, which are faultless, or nearly so, which are the fruit, not of his own illuminated mind, but of his careful study, sometimes of his accurate translation, of Catholic originals. The natural heart can burst forth, by fits and starts, into emotions of love toward God. The natural imagination can depict the beauty and glory of the divine attributes.

Catholic truths and rites are so beautiful, so great, so consolatory, that they draw one on to love and admire them with a natural love, as a prospect might draw them on, or a skilful piece of mechanism. Hence men of lively imagination profess this doctrine or that, or adopt this or that ceremony or usage, for their mere beauty's sake, not asking themselves whether they are true, and having no real perception or mental hold of them. Thus, too, they will decorate their churches, stretch and strain their ritual, and attempt candles, vestments, flowers, incense, and processions, not from faith, but from poetical feeling.

Moreover, the Catholic Creed, as coming from God, is so harmonious, so consistent with itself, holds together so perfectly, so corresponds part to part, that an acute mind, knowing one portion of it, would often infer another portion, merely as a matter of just reasoning. Thus an accurate thinker might be sure that, if God is infinite and man finite, there must be mysteries in religion. It is not that he feels the mysteriousness of religion, but he infers it; he is led to it as a matter of necessity; and, from mere clearness of mind and love of consistency, he maintains it.

Learned men, outside the Church, may compose most useful works on the evidences of religion, or in defence of particular doctrines, or in explanation of the whole scheme of Catholicism. In these cases reason becomes the handmaid of faith. Still it is not faith; it does not rise above an intellectual view or notion; it affirms, not as grasping the truth, not as seeing, but as "being of opinion," as "judging," as "coming to a conclusion."

The natural man, then, can feel; he can imagine, he can admire, he can reason, he can infer. In all these ways he may proceed to receive the whole or part of Catholic truth; but he cannot see, he cannot love. His religious sentiments may be right and good in themselves, but not in him. His heretical sentiments on other points are a proof that he does not see what he speaks of.

The natural conscience may ascertain and put in order the truths of the great moral law, nay, even to the condemnation of that concupiscence which it is too weak to subdue, and is persuaded to tolerate. The natural will can do many things really good and praiseworthy; nay, in particular cases, or at particular seasons, when temptation is away, it may seem to have strength which it has not, and to be imitating the austerity and purity of a saint. One man has no temptation to hoard; another has no temptation to gluttony and drunkenness; another has no temptation to ill-humor; another has no temptation to be ambitious and overbearing. Hence human nature may often show to advantage; it may be meek, amiable, kind, benevolent, generous, honest, upright, and temperate. Hence a man may talk of Christ and heaven, too, read Scripture, and "do many things gladly," in consequence of reading, and exercise a certain sort of belief, however different from that faith which is imparted to us by grace. The natural man, therefore, before he is brought under the grace of God, can but inquire, reason, argue, and conclude, about religious truth, but he does not and cannot see it. (Dr. Newman, on Grace.)

§ 2.—WHAT OF OURSELVES WE CANNOT DO.

The natural man needs light to see material objects; and he likewise needs light in order to see the truths which God has revealed. These truths are of a supernatural and mysterious character. Our whole religion is a deep mystery. To see it, man needs supernatural light, or the grace of God. Now, though his mind be the eyes, the grace of God is the light. He is born under a privation of this blessed spiritual light; and whilst this privation continues, he will not, cannot, really see the truths of religion. I do not say he will have no thought about God and his revelation, nor be able to talk about him. True, but he will not be able to do more than reason about him. Man, then, of himself cannot raise himself above the level of his nature. To be able to see and believe truths of a supernatural character, his understanding must receive supernatural light; to practise a religion which requires the mortification of the senses, the crucifixion of the natural man, his will must be strengthened and upheld by a supernatural power. To love what is revolting to nature, the heart of man must be endowed with supernatural love. To be able to be united with God in heaven, we must be like unto God; for, only things of the same nature unite. We must be holy; the life of our souls must be a divine or supernatural life. We must have ceased to be purely natural men. God must live in our souls. Now, it is not in our own power to make ourselves holy and pleasing to God; we cannot make God come down into our soul and unite himself to it, and make us lead a divine life. We are as little able to do this as an animal is to change itself into a human being. God, in his infinite mercy, must come to us, draw us to himself, and always assist us in leading holy lives to the hour of our death. He must come to us by faith, enlightening us so as to see and believe the truths of religion; he must come to us by hope, inspiring us with sincere sorrow for our sins and a confident hope of pardon; he must come to us by charity, inflaming us with love for him and all his commandments; and God must stay with us to the end of our lives, and assist us in keeping his holy precepts.

These great truths are clearly expressed in Holy Scripture. "I am the vine," says our divine Saviour, "you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for, without me you can do nothing." (John xv, 5.) From these words of Christ it is evident that, of ourselves, we can do nothing, absolutely nothing, in thought, word, or deed, toward the work of our salvation; that grace is absolutely necessary to begin, to continue, and to finish, this great work. Now, the beginning of our salvation is the thought of salvation. From the thought of salvation arises the desire of salvation. The desire of salvation prepares the soul to comply with the conditions of salvation. Now, the first condition of salvation is true faith. The beginning of true faith, then, is the desire thereof, arising from the thought of salvation. The pious desire of faith, however, is not yet formal faith; it is but the good thought of wishing to believe, which, as St. Augustine says, precedes belief. Now, this good thought does not arise from the natural light of the intellect, by which man is capable of seeing some truths of faith; it is inspired by the grace of God, "who worketh in you," says St. Paul, "both to will and to accomplish." (Phil. ii, 13.) "Without my grace," said our Lord to St. Catharine of Sienna, "you would not even desire to be saved." It is by the thought of salvation that God begins the work of man's salvation. "No man," says Jesus Christ, "can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him" (John, vi, 44); that is, draw him by the thought and desire of being saved. And this desire of salvation, inspired by Almighty God, must also be accomplished by him; he must enlighten man to see and believe the truths of salvation. "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona," said our Lord to St. Peter; "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." That is to say, it is not from the natural light of the intellect, but from a particular light of grace, that you know that I am the Son of God; for "no one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him."

With our own strength, therefore, we cannot even dispose ourselves to receive from God such graces as lead us to him who is life everlasting; for such graces are of the supernatural order, and therefore a disposition merely natural cannot dispose us to receive a supernatural grace. "Not that we are sufficient," says St. Paul, "to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. iii, 5.) The grace of God is also necessary to continue and finish the work of our salvation. Who, without grace, could fulfil the first and most important commandment, which is to love God above all things? "Charity is from God." (1 John iv, 9.) "The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost." (Rom. v, 5.) Holy charity is a pure gift of God, and we cannot obtain it by our own strength. How could we, without grace, conquer temptations, especially grievous ones? "Being pushed," says holy David, "I was overturned that I might fall, but the Lord supported me." (Ps. cxvii, 13.) "No one," says the Wise Man, "can be continent (that is, resist temptations of concupiscence) except God gave it." (Wisd. viii, 21.) Hence the apostle, speaking of the temptations which assault us, says: "But in all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us." (Rom. viii, 37). And again: "Thanks be to God who always maketh us to triumph in Christ." (2 Cor. ii, 14.) St. Paul, therefore, thanks God for the victory over temptations, acknowledging that he conquers them by the power of grace. Now, this gratitude, as St. Augustine says, would be in vain, if the victory were not the gift of God.

Certain heretics have falsely asserted that the knowledge of the law was sufficient to enable us to observe it. It is, no doubt, a grace of God to know his law: "Blessed art thou, O Israel! to whom the Lord has made known his will." But by this grace only we are not able to observe the commandments. For, if man, purely by the aid of the law, could observe the law, then Jesus Christ died in vain, as St. Paul tells us. (Gal. ii, 21.) But such is not the case. To keep the commandments, we stand in need of actual grace; and this actual grace was procured for us by the death of Jesus Christ. Nay, so far is the knowledge of the law alone not sufficient for the observance of the commandments, that, as the apostle says, the very law itself is the cause of our transgressing the law. "When I lived without the law, sin was dead; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." (Rom. vii, 8.) St. Augustine gives the reason why the knowledge of the law renders us guilty rather than innocent. This happens, he says, because, such is the condition of our corrupt will, that, loving liberty, it is carried with more vehemence to what is prohibited than to what is permitted. It is therefore God's grace which causes us to love and to do what we know we ought to do. This great truth was declared by God, many centuries ago, in these words: "I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and keep my judgments and do them." (Ezech. xxxvi, 27.) Consequently, man does, as St. Leo I says, only as much good as God, by his grace, enables him to do. It is therefore an article of faith that no one can do the least good work meritorious of heaven, without God's particular assistance.

§ 3.—WHAT GRACE IS, AND HOW IT IS DIVIDED.

2. What is grace?

Grace is a gratuitous gift of God, which helps us to attain eternal life.

The word grace means, in general, a gift, a favor, a kindness, liberally granted, which is not due to us by any title whatever; for, if it were due to us, it would not be a grace. God bestows upon us *natural* and *supernatural* graces. Natural graces are those purely natural gifts which regard the present life; such as the use of reason, free-will, soundness of judgment, depth of comprehension, the faculties of thinking, arguing, drawing conclusions, seeing, hearing, feeling, and such like blessings. These natural graces are given to man inasmuch as he is a created being, but they cannot raise him above the nature or condition of man. However, by the help of *supernatural* graces, they can become the means of salvation.

By supernatural graces are meant the aids which God grants to man, in order to raise him from his natural to a supernatural state, in which he is capable of gaining eternal life, of seeing God face to face, and of enjoying him forever in heaven.

Divines distinguish different kinds of supernatural aid or grace as, *sufficient*, *actual*, *sanctifying grace*, and the grace of *perseverance*. Sufficient grace is that which God gives to all men, in order that, by the proper use of it, they may be saved.

Grace is called actual, when it really assists or actually helps us, either to dispose ourselves for receiving sanctifying grace, or to perform our duties as children of God. Actual grace, therefore, is an operation of God by which the mind of man is enlightened, his will excited, and his heart inflamed, to perform some good work, to repress an evil passion, to reform a bad habit, to surmount a temptation, to fulfil a duty relative to his salvation, to detest and be truly sorry for his sins, and purpose firmly to keep the commandments, and make use of the means by which God communicates sanctifying grace to his soul, or preserves and increases it when communicated. Actual grace, when preceding the deliberate action of the will, is called, according to the different aspects under which it is viewed, "anticipating," "exciting," "operating," while, when coming after, it is called "subsequent." Sanctifying grace is that great supernatural gift by which God frees our souls from sin, and makes us just and holy, his children, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. By this grace God communicates himself to our souls, not only spiritually, but also personally, by giving to us the Holy Ghost.

Besides actual and sanctifying graces, we need another, which enables us to remain faithful to grace until we enter upon eternal life. This special grace is called the gift of *perseverance*. Upon this gift our salvation depends.

Divines speak also of another kind of graces, which they call graces *gratuitously* bestowed: *gratiæ gratis datæ.* These graces are given to certain men for the conversion of infidels, heretics, sinners, or for the instruction of the faithful; in a word, for the benefit of their fellow-men. Such graces are the gifts of miracles, languages, prophecy, the talent for preaching, instructing, etc. "To one is given," says St. Paul, "the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, the grace of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of speeches." (1 Cor. xii, 7–10.)

St. Bernard had received a wonderful gift of performing miracles. However, he was more desirous to bring his flesh under subjection, than to restore the dead to life. Indeed, as a miracle is an act of God above the ordinary laws and rules of nature, so a meritorious action, performed in a proper spirit of charity, says St. Francis de Sales, is a miracle of grace, worth a hundred pounds of what divines call gratuitous graces, amongst which is that of operating miracles. The latter can exist even in a soul wedded to sin, and many have possessed it who will not be found in heaven; for our Lord has told us that, on the day of judgment, many will say to him: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and cast out devils in thy name, and in thy name done many miracles? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matt. vii, 22, 23.) Those gratuitous gifts do not render him who possesses them, better and holier in the sight of God; whilst he who dies in the least degree of sanctifying grace, cannot be lost, and has a claim to the inheritance of God.

§ 4.—THE GRACE OF GOD IS A GRATUITOUS GIFT.

The right of seeing God, the infinite Being in himself, belongs to God alone; and no creature or finite being, as such, can have any claim to that infinite bliss, nor consequently to any of the means which lead thereto. As eternal happiness, the possession of God, or anything leading to it, does not belong to the nature of man, God is under no greater obligation to raise him to a state in which he is rendered capable of seeing and enjoying his Creator, than he is to raise a stone to the nature of an animal.

By his own natural strength man, as we have seen, can acquire much knowledge about God; he can recognize God as the author and preserver of his being, and love him as such. But he can never know and love him so as to deserve to see him face to face. For this, there is needed a life superior to that of man,—a life flowing from God to man, by which a relationship is established between God and man,—a relationship by which God adopts man as his child.

Adam was thus privileged from the beginning. God made him his son, and enabled him to win heaven by obedience. But Adam lost this sonship by his disobedience, and fell back into the state of a mere creature and servant. As he stood for us all, we all fell in him. We were utterly unable to recover our state of innocence and relationship with God. Since the fall, we were altogether unworthy of grace. Now, if God, through the merits of his Son, has given us back even greater gifts than we lost in Adam, it is clear that every one of these gifts is a pure, gratuitous gift of his infinite mercy and charity.

The Apostle St. Paul shows, in several places, that divine grace is in everything gratuitous, and comes from the mercy of God alone, and is independent of our natural merits In one place he says: "For unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him." (Phil. i, 29.) Therefore, as St. Augustine says (lib. ii, de Præd., c. 2), it is a gift of God, not only to suffer for love of him, but even to believe in him; and, if it is a gift of God, it cannot be given us through our merits. The apostle writes the same thing to the Corinthians, telling them that "he had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." (Cor. vii, 25.) It is therefore not through any merit of ours that we are faithful to the mercy of God.

St. Paul next shows most clearly that, whenever we receive light from God, or strength to act, it is not by our own merits, but by a gratuitous gift of God. "For who distinguisheth thee," says the apostle, "or what hast thou, that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv, 7.) If grace were given according to our natural merits, derived solely from the strength of our free-will, then these natural merits would distinguish a man who thus works out his salvation, from one who does not do so. St. Augustine even says that, if God would give us only free-will,—that is, a will free and indifferent either to good or evil, according as we use it,—in case the good will would come from ourselves and not from God, then what came from ourselves would be better than what comes from God. (Lib. ii, de Pec. Mer., c. 18.) But it is not so; for the apostle tells us that whatever we have from God is all gratuitously given to us, and therefore we should not pride ourselves on it.

The gratuity of grace is also strongly confirmed by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans (xi, 5, 6): "Even so, then, at this present time also, there is a remnant saved according to the election of grace." (The apostle means by "the remnant" those few Jews who were faithful among the multitude of unbelievers.) "And if by grace, it is not now by works; otherwise, grace is no more grace." Now, the apostle could not express in stronger terms the Catholic truth, that grace is a gratuitous gift of God, and depends, not on the merits of our free-will, but on the mere liberality of the Lord.

The grace of God helps us to attain eternal life. The divine grace is granted by the Lord with a view to our salvation; for, the end which God proposes to himself in granting graces is the salvation of our souls. He intends and wishes that, by means of his grace, we should be helped to perform such acts and works as will secure the eternal happiness of our souls.

§ 5.—HOW THE GRACE OF GOD HELPS US TO ATTAIN ETERNAL LIFE.

3. How does the grace of God help us?

It enlightens the understanding, and strengthens the will to avoid sin, and to do what God commands.

Man is a being that can be influenced by another for good or for evil. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," is a proverb as old as human experience. There is an infidel. He knows how to pervert the plainest ideas. The gratification of low, beastly passions, he dignifies with the sweet, hallowed name of love. Shameful lust he paints as a fond, romantic passion; infidelity he declares to be the mark of a strong mind; disobedience is but honorable independence of character; pride is noble self-respect. Man, he says, is a free being. He, therefore, has a right to gratify every desire of his heart, and to enjoy every earthly pleasure.

With regard to the next life, he speaks to every one in the manner best suited to his natural character. To some he says: "There is nothing hereafter: it is all over with death." To another: "The future is uncertain. No one has ever come back from the other world. How foolish, then, to sacrifice the present certain happiness for an uncertain, dreamy future! 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'" To others he tells that they shall be translated from the joys of this life to the endless joys of the next. The great Father is loving and merciful, you know. And even at the very worst, those who have been imprudent in this life will, perhaps, have to wander from star to star until they are entirely purified. Beyond the starry spheres there dwells the great Father of all, and he has not the heart to punish his weak, sinful creature." To others he says that, if there is a hell, it is made only for murderers and highway-robbers, or for those poor, low, ignorant, drunken Papists. Of course, that dreadful place was never intended for those refined ladies with their diamonds, nor for those polite and witty gentlemen so humane that their hearts overflow with compassion at the sight of a lame horse. Now, let a young man, who is yet a practical Catholic, often associate with such an infidel, and he will soon realize the proverb, "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

But I have here met a great and good man, I associate with him, and I am never afterward what I was before. I feel that a virtue has gone forth from him and entered into my life, so that I am not, and can never be again, the man I was before I met him. What is the explanation of this fact? How happens it that I am benefited by my intercourse with the good, and injured by my intercourse with the bad? How is it that one man is able to influence another, whether for good or for evil? What is the meaning of influence itself? Influence: in-flowing, flowing in,—what is this but the fact that man is a being depending on another either for good or for evil? Now, what is the good on which man depends?

The *good* of each being is that which makes the being better and more perfect. It is clear that inferior beings cannot make superior ones better and more perfect. Now, the soul, being immortal, is superior to all earthly or perishable things. These, then, cannot make the soul better and more perfect, but rather worse than she is; for, he who seeks what is worse than himself, makes himself worse than he was before. Therefore, the good—the life of the soul—can be only that which is better and more excellent than the soul herself is. Now, God alone is this Good—he being supreme goodness itself. He who possesses God, may be said to possess the goodness of all other things; for, whatever goodness they possess, they have from God. Now, the soul of man is the likeness of God: communion, therefore, between God and man is easy, for like communes with like; in other words, it is easy for God to commune with man or influence him for good, to make him better and more perfect than he is. Now, how does God influence us? How does his grace help us? The grace of God helps us by working upon our soul outwardly and inwardly. It works outwardly upon us by the word of God, by pious, instructive reading, wholesome admonitions, Christian education, wise counsels of pastors, good examples, humiliations, death of friends, poverty, sickness, and other things which God uses to act upon us and draw us to himself. The grace of God works upon us inwardly, when it enlightens the mind to understand the truths of religion; when it inclines the will to believe and embrace the truth; when it inspires the heart with a sincere desire to know and hear the truth; when it enlightens the soul to know its great sinfulness; when it inspires us with a true desire to rid ourselves of sin, and with courage to adopt the means which God has given to free ourselves from sin, to enter again into his friendship, and to persevere in leading holy lives. Such good thoughts and desires, such holy inspirations and lights, such strength and courage, such wholesome affections and pious sentiments, are all so many internal graces of Almighty God to draw us to himself—to life everlasting. This influence of God upon us, or the help of his grace, will be the stronger, the closer our communion is with the Almighty, the only source of all supernatural life and goodness.

§ 6.—GOD GIVES SUFFICIENT GRACE TO ALL MEN TO BE SAVED.

4. Does God give his grace to all men?

God gives to every man grace to pray, and has promised to hear our prayers.

From what has been said about the necessity of grace, it might be concluded that a state of nature is utterly destitute of the influences of grace, and that those who are outside the Church are simply actuated by nature. But such is not the case in fact. God gives his grace to all men; and to those who profit by it, he gives more grace. All men, it is true, have not the same amount of grace: God gives to every one as much as he pleases. The Jews had more grace than the heathens; Christians have more than the Jews. Some individuals have more than others. But he who has least has enough for salvation. "Almighty God does not call," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "without giving, at the same time, to those whom he calls, all that is required to accomplish the end for which he calls." Now, he has called all men to everlasting happiness in heaven. Numberless passages of Holy Scripture prove that God wishes all men to be saved. St. Paul most emphatically asserts that "God wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii, 4.) Hence he tells us to pray for all: "I desire, first of all," he says, "that supplications be made for all men . . . for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved," etc. Speaking of our Saviour, St. Paul also says: "Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all." (1 Tim. ii, 6.) If Jesus Christ, then, redeemed all men, he surely wills that all men should be saved. "Come to me," says our dear Saviour, "all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi, 28.) Come, he says, all you burdened with your sins, and I will repair the ruin which you yourselves have occasioned. When, therefore, Jesus Christ invites all to accept a remedy, he wishes that all should be saved.

St. Peter says: "The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance." (2 Pet. iii, 9.) Mark this,—that all should return to penance! God does not wish that any one should be damned, even sinners, while in this life, but that all should repent of their sins, and be saved.

Although we offend God by our sins, he does not wish our death, but that we should live. In the book of Wisdom (xi, 25) we read: "Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things thou hast made. . . . Thou sparest all, because they are thine, O Lord! who lovest souls." If God, then, loves all his creatures, and especially the souls he created, and is always ready to pardon those who repent of their sins, how can any one imagine for a moment that God creates souls solely for the purpose of tormenting them in hell? No! God does not wish to see them lost, but saved; and when he sees that we are hurrying to eternal torments by our sins, he implores us to retrace our steps and avoid destruction. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, and why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezech. xxxiii, 11.) Poor sinners, he says, why will you persevere in damning yourselves? Return to me, and you will find again the life which you have lost. Hence it was that our Saviour, viewing Jerusalem, and considering the destruction the Jews were bringing on themselves by the crime of putting him to death, "wept over it." (Luke xix, 41.) In another place he declares that he does not wish the death of the sinner, and even swears thus: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." (Ezech. xxxiii, 11.) Now, if Almighty God wishes that all men should be saved by the observance of his law, it would no doubt be the height of impiety to suppose that he would lay his commandments upon us and oblige us to keep them under pain of eternal damnation, and, at the same time, withhold those helps without which it is impossible to obey his commands. Nothing can be so contrary to our ideas of the wisdom, goodness, and justice of God, as such a supposition. Seeing, then, that God bids all men to keep his commandments, we must firmly believe that he gives to every one the grace necessary to obey the divine will, and thus save his soul.

§ 7.—WHAT GRACE GOD GIVES TO ALL MEN TO BE SAVED.

The grace which God gives to all men without exception, and which enables them to obtain from him all the graces necessary for their salvation, is the grace of prayer, and the promise to hear their prayers.

That God gives to every man enough grace to enable him to pray, is evident from the fact that he commands all men to pray to him and ask for his graces: which command he could not give, if he did not give them the grace to pray to him. However, there may be persons who are not able to perform fervent prayers to which God is accustomed to grant those graces which are necessary for salvation. "Prayer, such as it ought to be," says St. Augustine, "is not in our unaided power. The gift of prayer comes from grace, as the apostle says: 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmity; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself asketh for us.'" (Rom. viii, 26.) Thus we cannot even boast of praying, for our very prayer is a gift from God. But as God gives to every one the grace to pray, he gives him through prayer the means of obtaining more grace; and if he perseveres in asking of God the grace of making better prayers, he will be heard. His prayers will gradually become more fervent, and God then will grant his petition for those efficacious graces which enable him to do what has been commanded: and thus will he save his soul.

The Lacedæmonians, in order to make their children expert in the use of the bow, were accustomed to place their food in a position beyond their reach, and they then said: "Now, children, there is your food; shoot it down, if you want it." It is thus that God seems to speak to sinners. "Behold," he says, "poor helpless sinners, my grace is ready for you at any time; aim at it, that is, pray to me for it, if you want it—for as many graces will descend upon you as you will shoot down by the darts of prayer; and should you not even have the desire to pray for my grace, or should you have no fervor in prayer, then ask for the grace to pray with all earnestness and fervor, and be assured this grace shall be given you. If you neglect to do so, you shall certainly perish. I told you often, and I repeat it: 'Call on me, and I will hear you;' 'Ask, and you shall receive;' 'Whatsoever you ask, you shall receive.' And lest any one should suppose that this promise applied only to the just, I have added purposely: 'Every one who asks, shall receive.' Every one, without exception, whether he be a just man or a sinner, shall receive what he asks of me, but ask he must." Thus God, in his infinite goodness, has promised to give everything to him who prays.

§ 8.—WHAT GRACE THE SINNER OBTAINS BY PRAYER.

5. What grace does the sinner obtain by prayer?

The particular grace to dispose himself for receiving sanctifying grace.

There was once a little girl living in one of our large cities. She had a small rosebush in a flower-pot—it was her only companion. She loved it dearly. The street or lane in which she lived was very narrow, and the houses

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were high, so that not a ray of blessed sunshine ever stole into her dark, mouldy room. Now, the child feared that the little flower might die. So she took it every day in her arms, went into the yard, and placed it in the sunshine and watched it with the greatest joy, while the little flower drank in the warm sunlight.

The sinner must imitate this little child. His rosebush, in which he must take the greatest interest, is his immortal soul. He lives in an atmosphere that is dark with sin, the sweet light of grace penetrates his soul so seldom. The plant that grows in a cellar looks pale and sickly: so does the soul without the light of grace. What is he to do? He must open his heart to God in prayer, as the flower-bud opens its calyx to the sun. Then the Holy Ghost will fill his heart with sweet, heavenly thoughts and desires, just as the sun gives to the rose its lovely hues and its sweet fragrance.

A certain young man, named Lanfranc, was greatly devoted to the study of human sciences, and was renowned for his learning; but, unfortunately, he was careless about the welfare of his immortal soul. One day he was going through a forest on his way to Rouen in France. Suddenly he was attacked by a gang of robbers. They seized him, robbed him of all he had, tied his hands, bandaged his eyes, and finally left him among the brushwood, far away from the main road. Lanfranc called for help, but in vain. Night came on; he was helpless and alone in the vast forest. He now began to review his past life. He wished to pray to God, but he did not know in what manner. Prayer was something he had never practised.

"O my God!" said he at last, "I have spent so much of my time in profane studies, I have exhausted mind and body in these studies, and yet I have never learned how to pray to thee. O Lord! help me this time. Deliver me from this danger, and I promise thee that, with the help of thy grace, I shall employ the rest of my life in serving only thee."

The whole night was thus spent in the forest. Toward daybreak he heard some travellers passing. He began to cry for help with all his might. At first the travellers were terrified, imagining they heard the cry of some wild beast. At last, recognizing the voice of a human being, they drew near, and finding out who it was, they untied him and brought him to the road. Lanfranc begged the travellers to show him the way to the nearest monastery. They did so, and departed. Lanfranc soon found it: it was the famous Abbey of Bec. He became afterward (A. D. 1050) Archbishop of Canterbury, in England.

Lanfranc represents the poor sinner, who, deprived of God's grace, is helpless and abandoned. He is unable, of his own strength, to rise from the state of sin and recover the friendship of God. "If any one," says the Council of Trent, "asserts that, without the preceding inspiration and grace of the Holy Ghost, man can believe, hope, love, or repent in such a manner as he ought, let him be anathema." Consider well the words: "Repent in such a manner as he ought." Judas, too, repented, for Holy Scripture says of him: "Then Judas, who betrayed Jesus, seeing that he was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (Matt. xxvii, 3.) But this was not such a repentance as is required for justification; it proceeded only from natural motives, and consequently led to despair. "And

Judas," as Holy Scripture says, "went and hanged himself with a halter." (Matt. xxvii, 5.) We can indeed fall into sin without any assistance; but rise from sin we cannot, except by the special assistance of God. I can pluck out my eyes; but to set them in again properly, is beyond my power. I can likewise lose the grace of God; but to recover it without God's assistance, is more than I can do. St. Peter remained chained in prison until an angel came and said to him, "Arise," and the chains fell off from his hands. (Acts xii, 7.) Had St. Peter not been awakened by the angel, he would not have thought of rising; and should he have thought of it, he would not have been able to free himself from his fetters. In like manner, the soul which has once been chained by sin will scarcely ever think seriously of being converted and of returning to God; and should it even think of this, all its efforts will not suffice to break the chains of sin, and free it from the slavery of the devil, if God's grace does not come to its aid.

One day, St. Anselm met a boy playing with a bird. The poor bird tried to fly away, but it could not, as the boy held it by a thread which he had tied to its leg. The little bird tried to fly away again and again, but the boy always pulled it back, and laughed and leaped for joy, as he saw it flutter and fall upon the ground. St. Anselm stood gazing for a considerable time at this strange sport, and showed the greatest compassion for the poor little bird. Suddenly the thread broke, and the little bird flew away. The boy began to cry, but St. Anselm expressed the greatest joy. All present were astonished to see so great a prelate take such an interest in this childish sport. But St. Anselm said: "Do you know what I thought of, on seeing this boy amuse himself thus with the bird? Ah! it is thus, thought I, that the devil makes sport of sinners. He ties them at first, as it were, with a slender thread, and then sports with them as he pleases, drawing them from one sin into another." Some he ties by indifference to God and to their own salvation; others, by too great a love for the goods of this world; some, again, he ties by the sin of avarice, others by the sin of uncleanness, others by the sin of theft, and so on. Many an unfortunate sinner, seeing his great misery, will cry out and sigh like St. Augustine: "How long, O Lord! Wilt thou be angry forever? Remember not my past iniquities." And perceiving himself still held back by them, he cast forth miserable complaints, and reproached himself, saying: "How long? How long? To-morrow! To-morrow! Why not now? Why does not this hour put an end to my filthiness?" These complaints he uttered, and he wept with most bitter contrition of heart, not feeling courage enough to renounce his evil ways.

"Oh! would to God," cries many a sinner, "that I were free from this accursed habit of drinking, of swearing, of sinning against the angelic virtue of holy purity! What am I to do?" Like the little bird, this poor sinner wishes to get free from his sinful habits, but in vain. The devil keeps him tied by his evil habits, and drags him back into his old sins. At last the unhappy wretch, seeing that he cannot get free, gives way to despair.

Many sinners even become so hardened, that they resemble incarnate demons: even were hell open before them, they would still continue to sin. Others, again, are so unhappy, that they do not see their misery; and some even do not wish to see it, lest they should feel any stings of conscience, and conceive a desire of amendment.

Now, are such sinners altogether abandoned by the grace of God? Should they despair of their salvation? By no means. As God never withdraws from them the grace to pray to him, they obtain, by prayer, a particular actual grace enabling them to dispose themselves for receiving sanctifying grace.

There is an infidel. He is as yet groping in the darkness of heathenism. However, he believes in the Supreme Being, who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. If he prays to God to lead him to the way of salvation, his prayer will be heard.

Clovis, heathen King of the Franks, the greatest conqueror of his age, married St. Clotildis in 493. The first fruit of their marriage was a son, who, by the mother's influence, was baptized and called Ingomer. This child died during the time of his wearing the white habit, within the first week after his baptism. Clovis severely reproached Clotildis and said: "If he had been consecrated in the name of my gods, he had not died; but having been baptized in the name of yours, he could not live." The queen answered: "I thank God who has thought me worthy of bearing a child whom he has called to his kingdom." She had afterward another son, for whom she procured baptism, and who was named Chlodomir. He also fell sick, and the king said, in great anger: "It could not be otherwise: he will die presently in the same manner his brother did, having been baptized in the name of your Christ." God was pleased to put the good queen to this trial; but by her prayers the child recovered. She never ceased to exhort the king to forsake his idols and to acknowledge the true God; but he held out a long time against all her arguments, till, on the following occasion, God was pleased wonderfully to bring him to the confession of his holy name:—In an engagement with the Suevi and Alemanni, which was one of the fiercest battles recorded in history, the king and his whole army were in imminent danger of being defeated by the Alemanni. Seeing that he could be saved only by a supernatural power, he began to pray thus: "Jesus Christ, thou of whom Clotildis has often told me that thou art the Son of the living God, and that thou givest aid to the hard-pressed, and victory to those who trust in thee! I humbly crave thy powerful assistance. If thou grantest me the victory over my enemies, I will believe in thee and be baptized in thy name. For I have called upon my gods in vain. They must be impotent, as they cannot help those who serve them. Now I invoke thee, desiring to believe in thee: do, then, deliver me from the hands of my adversaries."

No sooner had Clovis uttered his prayer than the Alemanni became panic-stricken, took to flight, and soon after, seeing their king slain, sued for peace. Thereupon Clovis united both nations, the Franks and the Alemanni, returned home, and became a Christian.

There is another man: he is as yet groping in the darkness of error and heresy. Let him pray in this way: "My Lord Jesus Christ, if I cannot be saved in my religion, enlighten my mind to know what is better, and give me courage to do better," and the Lord will not fail to hear his prayer and bring him to the light of the true religion. Witness F. Thayer, a minister of the Anglican Church, who prayed in such a manner, and obtained the gift of true faith.

There is another. He is an apostate Catholic. He has given up the practice of his religion for several years. He has joined a secret society. He has no courage to give it up and return to his religious duties. Let him persevere in praying to the Lord for courage, for true sorrow and amendment of life, and his prayers will be heard. He will again become a good Catholic.

La Harpe was an infidel, and a great friend of Voltaire; he wrote several works against religion. At last, when the French Revolution broke out, he was seized and cast into prison. There, in the silence and solitude of his cell, he found time to examine the truths of religion, which he had hitherto neglected. He was, as he himself relates, sad and lonely in his cell. To while away his time, he read a few pious books that had been given him. Gradually the light of faith began to dawn again in his heart; but this heavenly light filled him with terror. All the sins of his whole life came up before him. He knew that death was at hand; for, in those days, there was but one step from the prison to the scaffold. For the first time in forty years he turned to God in an humble, sorrowful heart, and began to *pray*. There was no priest near to prepare him for death. They were all dead, banished, or put to death. What was he to do? At last, after having offered up a *fervent prayer*, he opened, at random, a copy of the "Imitation of Christ," and read these consoling words: "See, my son, I have come to thee, because thou hast called me." These words filled him with unspeakable consolation. His heart was touched; he fell upon his face; he burst into tears. This was the beginning of a new life. La Harpe was afterward set free; but he remained ever after faithful to the good resolutions he had formed whilst shut up in his dreary prison.

Indeed, as fire quickly burns tow, so quickly does God change the heart of the sinner, and dispose him for receiving sanctifying grace, provided such a favor is asked.

The parish-priest of Notre Dame des Victoires in Paris said one day, in a sermon, that prayer to the Blessed Virgin was so powerful, that even *one* Hail Mary would be enough to convert a sinner. Now, a celebrated writer, a bad Catholic, happened to be in the church at the time. He had come to scoff at the words of the priest. "What!" said he, laughing, "one Hail Mary! Well, let me try it!" So he said the Hail Mary. He had not prayed for a long time; and, after having said one Hail Mary, he thought he would say another. Finally, after the sermon, he went into the sacristy to have a talk with the priest, and, before he left that sacristy, he made his confession, and was reconciled with God.

§ 9.—HOW GOD DISPOSES THE SINNER FOR RECEIVING SANCTIFYING GRACE.

6. In what does the disposition consist?

It consists in the detestation of sin, and in the firm purpose to keep the commandments.

The disposition necessary for the sinner to receive sanctifying grace is: First, to believe in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world; for, "without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. xi, 6.) Secondly, to be sorry for his sins: "If the impious man be converted and do penance, he shall live and shall not die." (Ezech. xviii, 21.) Thirdly, to hope confidently that he will obtain the forgiveness of his sins, on account of Christ's merits: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just, and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." (1 John i, 1, 2.) Fourthly, to have the firm purpose to keep the commandments: "You are my friends if you do the things that I command you." (John xv, 14.) Fifthly, to desire to be baptized, or, if baptized, to receive the sacrament of penance: "Do penance and be baptized every one of you . . . for the remission of your sins." (Acts ii, 37, 38.)

There is a man. He finds it strange to be any thing else than a natural man. His pattern man is the natural man. He perceives that he has in himself a number of propensities, inclinations, and passions; and because they are in his nature, he thinks that each of them may be indulged for its own sake, provided no harm is done to others, or to a person's bodily, mental, and temporal well-being. He thinks that want of moderation, or excess, is the true definition of sin, if he goes so far as to admit that word. He thinks that he is a perfect man who eats and drinks, sleeps and walks, recreates himself and studies, writes and attends to religion, in moderation. He is very slow to believe that wilfully evil thoughts are really displeasing to God, and deserving of punishment. Works and actions which are seen, and which have influence, he will admit to be wrong; but he is blind to the malice of thoughts, of imaginations, of wishes, and of works. He will not even believe that deeds are sinful, or that they are more than reprehensible, if they are private and personal. Concupiscence may be indulged, because, in his opinion, it is natural. Like the proud spirit in the beginning of the world, he wishes to find his supreme good in his own nature or being, and in nothing above it. He undertakes to be sufficient for his own happiness. He has no desire for the supernatural, and therefore does not believe in it. And as nature cannot rise above nature, he will not believe that the narrow way to heaven is possible. He hates those who enter upon it as if they were pretenders and hypocrites, or looks on their aspirations as romance and fanaticism. He values the laws of this physical creation so highly, that he disbelieves the existence of miracles, as being an interruption of them. He deifies and worships human nature and its impulses, and denies the power and the granting of grace. Behold a man, to whom the words of St. Paul apply: "The sensual" (or natural) "man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand." (1 Cor. ii, 14.)

Now, that man can be changed by the grace of God and become a fervent Catholic! "The heart of man," says Holy Writ, "is in the hand of the Lord; he turns it whithersoever he wills." In one moment the Lord can enlighten the sinner so as to make him see and understand the misery and danger of his state; he can so move his will as to make him take a firm resolution to amend; he can, in one moment, fill the heart of the sinner with so much confidence in his mercy and in the merits of Christ, as to make him firmly hope for the forgiveness of all his sins, detest the same in sincere sorrow of heart, purpose to keep the commandments, and desire to be baptized.

Now, the usual means which God uses to convert the sinner is to give him an opportunity to hear the truths of salvation: the preaching of the Gospel. He then gives him the grace to believe those truths, and to trust in God's faithfulness to his promises. He believes, especially, that God pardons the sinner, and receives him into his friendship, on account of the merits of Jesus Christ. But, in hearing the sacred law promulgated, he perceives that he is a sinner, and therefore fears the justice of God, which is provoked by his iniquities. Having been cast down by this salutary shock, a feeling of confidence in the infinite mercy of God presents itself and raises him up. He hopes that God, in consideration of Christ's merits, will pardon him. Animated by this hope, he begins to love. This love leads him to detest his sins, to repent of them, to repair them, as far as possible; it makes him resolve to keep the commandments, and adopt the means of becoming reconciled with God.

A Christian woman who was taken prisoner by the Iberians (a people living near the Euxine Sea) excited their admiration by her great purity, her sobriety, her fidelity, and, especially, by her great love for prayer, in the exercise of which she often spent whole nights. The barbarians, astonished, asked her why she acted thus. She answered that it was thus she served Christ, her God. This answer only astonished them the more, for they had never heard the blessed name of Christ before. A woman especially wished to know if the practice of this religion would be useful to them. It was their custom that, whenever a child fell sick, the mother would take the child from house to house, asking if any one knew of a remedy. A woman, having thus sought relief for her child everywhere in vain, came at last to the captive. This good Christian told her that she knew of no human remedy; but that Jesus Christ, the God she adored, could cure every ailment, even the most desperate. She then laid the sick child on the poor pallet on which she slept, prayed over it, and the child was completely cured. The report of this miracle soon spread everywhere, and at length reached the ears of the queen, who was, at the time, dangerously ill. The queen sent a messenger to the captive, requesting her to come and cure her; but the poor slave, out of humility, was unwilling to go. The queen was then brought to the captive's cell, placed on her pallet, and, after the Christian had prayed for her in the name of Jesus Christ, she arose in perfect health. She then told the queen that it was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that had cured her, and exhorted her to pray to him at all times, as it was he who gives power to kings and life to all men.

The queen returned home, full of joy, and related to the king all the particulars of her cure. The king immediately ordered rich presents to be sent to the captive. But the queen said: "My lord, this woman is a Christian. She despises gold and silver and all the riches of this world. She leads a life of continual fasting and penance. The only reward she craves is that we worship Jesus Christ, her God."

The king promised to do so, but delayed from day to day. One day, as he was hunting in the woods, it grew suddenly dark,—so dark that you could not see your hand. The king lost his way, and soon found himself all alone in the midst of the forest. As he was wandering about, not knowing whither to turn, he bethought himself at last of the God of the Christians. He then vowed that, if Christ the Lord would free him from this terrible darkness, he would instantly renounce idolatry, and worship him alone. The moment he made this promise, daylight returned, and he found his way back to the city. He related this strange adventure to the queen. The captive was sent for. The king told her of his desire to worship Jesus Christ alone, and asked her how he should serve him. The slave taught him as well as she could, told him to build a church, and showed him how it was to be done. The king thereupon assembled the people, told them what had happened to himself and to the queen, and taught them, as well as he could, the Christian religion. The queen, on her part, instructed the women. The people began immediately to build a church. The walls were soon finished. The pillars were about to be erected. The first and the second pillar were put in their places, but the third pillar could not be moved, though they tried every possible means. At last the king became discouraged. Night came on, and the people retired to their homes. That whole night, the Christian captive remained praying in the church. Early, next morning, the king and the people returned. The pillar now rested perpendicularly above the base, but, by a strange miracle, it remained about a foot above the base, suspended in the air. The people, beholding the wonder, began to praise God, and to cry aloud that the religion of the captive was the only true one. While they spoke, the pillar descended gradually and rested on the base. The rest of the church was soon finished. The people now ardently desired to be instructed in the faith. At the suggestion of the captive, they sent an embassy to the Emperor Constantine, begging him to send them a bishop to finish the good work so happily begun. The emperor gladly granted this request; and thus the entire nation was received into the Holy Church (A. D. 327).

§ 10.—BY WHAT MEANS GOD CONVEYS SANCTIFYING GRACE TO THE SOUL.

7. By what means is sanctifying grace conveyed to the soul?

By the sacrament of baptism or of penance.

On the feast of Pentecost, St. Peter preached to a great multitude of people. About three thousand of them were enlightened and touched by the grace of God. They "had compunction in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles: What shall we do, men and brethren? But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts ii, 37, 38.) From these words of St. Peter it is clear that the sacrament of baptism is the means by which sanctifying grace, or the Holy Ghost, is communicated to the soul. The person receives from the Holy Ghost, in baptism, the remission of all his sins; he is made just and holy. God lives in him. The uncertainty and hesitation of mind which he may have shown before his conversion, is changed into a clear and fearless confidence. His religious doubts have all disappeared. He has no fears, no anxieties, no difficulties, no scruples: everything in religion is to him certainty and conviction. Look at the martyrs who, from being pagans, became Christians. They did not die for the sake of a religious opinion; they died for the sake of religion, because they were certain and convinced of its truth. The martyrs saw the truth, and how could they but speak what they had seen? They might shudder at the pain, but they could not help seeing the truth of their religion. Threats could not undo the heavenly truths, and therefore could not silence their confession of them. Hence no one can desert the Church without extinguishing the inestimable gift of grace,—the light of faith. This is the reason why the Church allows none of her children to call into question her divine mission. The light of faith which shines upon a man's mind so utterly consumes doubt, that hereafter he cannot entertain it, except by his own great fault. Those, however, who fall after baptism, cannot again receive baptism to recover sanctifying grace, but they must have recourse to the sacrament of penance, called by the fathers of the Church "a toilsome baptism." They must not merely detest the sins they are obliged to confess, but also atone for them by a suitable satisfaction. Instead of receiving the remission of all the punishment they incurred, they will, generally, obtain only the remission of the eternal, and part of the temporal, punishment.

§ 11.—SANCTIFYING GRACE CANNOT BE MERITED.

8. Can the sinner merit sanctifying grace?

No; he obtains it only through God's mercy, and the merits of Jesus Christ.

To merit something, means to do something that gives us a right to a reward. Now, can the sinner do something that gives him the right to claim sanctifying grace as a reward? By no means; for the good works performed in the state of mortal sin are so many dead works, and of too little value to merit so great a grace. Hence the Church teaches that, "whatever precedes justification, whether faith or good works, is insufficient to merit the grace of justification." (Conc. Trid., Sess. 6, c. viii.) To give sanctifying grace to a soul is, for God, as much as to give himself to her. Now, God is an infinite good. It is therefore self-evident that all the works of a man who is as yet at enmity with God, cannot give him the least right to the possession of an infinite good. Sanctifying grace, then, is bestowed gratuitously and through the pure mercy of God; it is never bestowed in consideration of the merits of the sinner, but in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, who alone is our mediator, and who, by the price of his blood, has merited for us the grace of reconciliation with his heavenly Father. All graces that were given before the coming of the Redeemer were given on account of the Redeemer to come, who was to merit those graces by laying down his life for mankind. The grace given to man after his fall is greater than that given before his fall. The reason is, because man, after his fall, was weak, ignorant, and inclined to evil. Everything was opposed to his eternal happiness; and he would have been lost, had not God given him greater help than he gave him when he was in a state of innocence.

§ 12.—ON WHAT SALVATION DEPENDS.

9. On what, then, does the salvation of man depend?
It depends on his making a good use of prayer, by which sinners obtain the grace of conversion; and the just, the grace to persevere in holiness of life.

Although it is true that no good works, done in the state of mortal sin, can of themselves merit or deserve the grace of justification, yet Almighty God, as we have seen above, expressly requires certain good works to be done by the sinner as necessary dispositions for receiving that grace. These dispositions are brought about in the sinner by *actual* grace, which God freely bestows on him in consideration of Christ's merits; and when these dispositions are in the soul, the grace of justification is never refused. It is given, not as due to the sinner, but as due to Jesus Christ and to God's own fidelity, who has promised that, when the sinner is so disposed, he will pardon his sins and receive him into his friendship. Now, *actual* grace, which disposes the sinner to receive the grace of justification, and enables the just man to persevere in holiness of life, is obtained by perseverance in prayer.

We may, therefore, fairly conclude that the whole mystery of man's salvation and sanctification depends entirely on the constant and proper use of this great means of prayer. "As God, in the natural order," says St. Alphonsus, "ordained that man should be born naked, and in want of many of the necessaries of life; and as, at the same time, he has given him hands and understanding to provide for all his wants, so, also, in the supernatural order, man is born incapable of remaining good and obtaining salvation by his own strength; but God, in his infinite goodness, grants to every one the grace of prayer, and wishes that all should make constant use of this grace, in order thereby to obtain all other necessary graces."

"God does not command impossibilities; but, when commanding, he admonishes us to do what we are able, and pray for what we are not able to do, and he then aids us that we may be able." (Conc. Trid., Sess. 6, c. xi.) Prayer, therefore, is the *universal* means by which every grace necessary to procure for us eternal life may be obtained with infallible certainty, since the Son of God cannot deceive us. In this respect it differs from the sacraments, from penitential works, and the other means which God has given us in order to obtain eternal life. These are particular means, each producing or procuring particular graces: baptism produces one grace, and penance, another. It is the same with the other sacraments or means of salvation. But to none of these, nor to all put together, without prayer, has God promised all the graces necessary for eternal life. Prayer is the only means to which he has promised all the *efficacious* helps and graces necessary for our salvation. It is a means given to all, without exception; for God gives the grace of prayer to the most hardened sinners as well as to the most holy of the just; and he has given it to every adult that ever lived, from the time of Adam to the present day. By making a good use of this grace of prayer, the worst sinner may obtain, as *infallibly* as the greatest saint, every efficacious grace necessary for his salvation, and may thus *infallibly* secure everlasting glory; for Jesus Christ has promised to hear the prayers of all,—of sinners as well as of saints: "For every one that asketh, receiveth." (Luke xi, 10.) He who says every one excepts none.

Hence, St. Alphonsus says that "one of the greatest pains of the damned is the thought that they could have saved themselves so easily by asking of God to give them true sorrow for their sins, and a firm will to amend their lives. No one, therefore," says the saint, "can excuse himself before God by saying that his salvation was impossible, on account of the difficulties and obstacles which he met in the way of salvation. God will not hearken to such an excuse; he will answer: 'If you had not strength and courage enough to overcome all obstacles and difficulties in the way of your salvation, why did you not ask me to come to your assistance?' If a man has fallen into a deep pit, and will not take hold of the rope that is let down to draw him up, it is clearly his own fault if he perishes. Thus the sinner, too, is lost through his own fault, if he neglects to pray for his salvation. 'I have waited for you so many years,' the Lord will say to the sinner, 'in the hope that you would at last ask for the grace of true repentance, for the amendment of your sinful life. Had you only asked, you would have instantly received; for, to call on me for assistance, is to be delivered and saved.'"

The conversion of King Manasses is a most striking proof of this truth. Manasses was twelve years old when his father died. He succeeded him on the throne, but not in his piety and fear of the Lord. He was as impious as his father had been pious toward God and his people. He introduced again all the abominations of the Gentiles, which the Lord had extirpated from among the children of Israel; he apostatized from the Lord; he brought in again, and encouraged, idolatry; even in the temple of the Lord he erected an altar to Baal; he introduced into the temple of the true God such abominations as had never been heard of before, and are too shameful to relate. To crown his impiety, he made his son pass through fire in honor of Moloch; he used divination, observed omens, appointed pythons, and multiplied soothsayers to do evil before the Lord, and to provoke him. (4 Kings xxi, 1-7.) The Lord often warned him through his prophets, but in vain. At last, "the Lord spoke to his prophets, saying: Because Manasses, King of Juda, hath done these most wicked abominations, beyond all that the Amorrhites did before him, and hath made Juda to sin with his filthy doings, therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring evils upon Jerusalem and Juda, that whosoever shall hear of them, both his ears shall tingle. I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the weight of the house of Achab, and I will efface Jerusalem, as tables are wont to be effaced; . . . and I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to their enemies." (4 Kings xxi, 10–14.)

Manasses, instead of entering into himself, added cruelty to idolatry. He shed so much innocent blood that, to use the words of Holy Writ, "he filled Jerusalem up to the mouth." (4 Kings xxi, 16.) According to Josephus (Ant. x, 13), "he went so far in his contempt for God as to kill all the just of the children of Israel, not sparing even the prophets, but taking away their lives day by day, so that streams of blood were flowing through the streets of Jerusalem." Now, do you think so impious a wretch could be converted? O wonderful power of prayer! so great is thy efficacy with God that, should a man be ever so impious and perverse, he will not fail to obtain forgiveness of the Lord, if he pray for it with a sincere heart. "And the Lord," says Holy Writ, "brought upon Jerusalem the captains of the army of the King of the Assyrians, and they took Manasses and carried him, bound with chains and fetters, to Babylon. In this great distress and affliction he entered into himself, and he prayed to the Lord his God, and did penance exceedingly before the God of his fathers, and he entreated him and he besought him earnestly; and the Lord heard his prayer, and brought him again to Jerusalem unto his kingdom. From that time forward he endeavored to serve the Lord the more fervently, the more grievously he had offended him. He abolished idolatry, destroyed the temples, altars, groves on the high places, put up in honor of heathenish deities; repaired the altar of Jehovah in the temple of Jerusalem, and sacrificed upon it victims and peace-offerings, and offerings of praise, and he commanded Juda to serve the Lord, the God of Israel." (2 Paral. xxxiii.)

I here repeat the words of St. Alphonsus: "How great will be the pain and misery of the damned, seeing that they might have been saved so easily, provided they had prayed to God for their salvation! All spiritual writers in their books, all preachers in their sermons, all confessors in their instructions to their penitents, should inculcate nothing more strongly than continual prayer; they should always admonish and continually repeat: Pray, pray, never cease to pray; for, if you pray, your salvation will be secure; but if you leave off praying, your damnation will be certain. All preachers and directors ought to do this, because, according to the opinion of every Catholic school, there is no doubt of this truth, that he who prays obtains grace and is saved; but those who practise it are too few, and this is the reason why so few are saved." (Chap. iv, on Prayer.) As prayer is for sinners the powerful means to obtain the grace of justification, so, also, it is for the just the powerful means to preserve themselves in the friendship of God.

If a man knows that he has never deserved the good graces of his king, that the friendship which he enjoys is a pure gift, and that he is to possess it only as long as he continues to ask for it, would he not, in case he wished to enjoy it always, be obliged to entreat his benefactor to continue this favor? Now, this is precisely the case with the just in regard to the friendship, the grace, of God. The grace of God is a pure gift, which no one can obtain by his own efforts, and, when it is obtained, no one can preserve it until death, unless God assist him.

It is the will of God that the just should be tried in various ways, by the temptations of the devil, by the passions of their own corrupt nature, and by the bad example and the persecutions of the wicked. Under these trials those only will remain faithful who pray to God for assistance. St. Thomas Aquinas asserts that "Adam committed sin because he neglected to pray when he was tempted." St. Gelasius says the same of the fallen angels. "In vain," he says, "did they receive the grace of God: they could not persevere, because they did not pray." (Epist. 5, ad Epis. in P.) St. Alphonsus relates that a certain aged Japanese Christian was condemned to be beheaded on account of his faith. His head was sawed off by slow degrees. He endured this cruel torture for a considerable time. At last he lost courage, and, ceasing to recommend himself to God, he died an apostate. ("Victories of the Martyrs," No. 25.) From such sad examples the just must learn that their salvation depends on their perseverance in praying to God for aid to overcome temptations, and to bear patiently the sufferings and crosses of this life. "Which of the just," asks St. John Chrysostom, "has ever fought valiantly without prayer? Which of them has ever conquered without prayer?" (Serm. de Mose.) None of the apostles, none of the martyrs, none of the confessors, none of the holy virgins and widows.

One day, one of our fathers took dinner with a venerable old priest; whilst sitting at table, he noticed scars on both sides of the aged priest's hands. Not knowing how to account for them, he asked him for an explanation. The venerable priest explained to him as follows: "When the slaughter of priests," said he, "was going on, by wholesale, during the French Revolution, I tried to escape death by hiding myself in a rack of hay; but I was discovered by an officer, who came and probed the rack with his sword, and pierced my hands, which were lying crosswise. I was taken to prison, to be executed on the next day. Never in my life did I experience such agony, such deadly fear; never did I understand more clearly what our dear Lord suffered in the garden of Gethsemani. According to the example of my divine Redeemer, I began to pray, and prayed until three o'clock in the morning. Suddenly I felt so great a comfort, consolation, and courage, that I even sighed after the hour of my execution. 'Would to God they would come!' At last, the door of the prison is thrown open. 'There they are,' I said; 'thanks be to God, now I am going to die for Jesus Christ.' But, alas! my exceedingly great joy is in an instant changed into an excess of grief. I am told that I am not to be executed, but set at liberty." Thus did prayer change this priest's sadness into joy, his cowardice into intrepidity, his horror of torture into a longing desire for the most exquisite torments.

Prayer should, then, be our favorite exercise. Every other kind of loss may be repaired, but the loss of prayer, never. If, on account of a delicate constitution, we cannot fast, we may give alms; if we have no opportunity to confess our sins, we may obtain the forgiveness of them by an act of perfect contrition; nay, even baptism itself may sometimes be supplied by an earnest desire for this sacrament, accompanied by an ardent love for God. But as for him who neglects to practise prayer, there is no other means of salvation left. But if we persevere in prayer, it will conduct us to heaven, there to reign eternally, with our Lord Jesus Christ and all the just, in everlasting joy and glory.

§ 13.—GRACE DOES NOT TAKE AWAY, BUT INCREASES LIBERTY.

10. Does the grace of God force us to do good?

By no means; it leaves us perfectly free to do or not to do it.

Man is endowed with free-will, which enables him to choose between doing and not doing a thing. This kind of liberty is called liberty of contradiction. Free-will also enables man to choose between doing a thing and doing the opposite. This kind of liberty is called liberty of contrariety. This liberty, therefore, leaves man free to choose either good or evil.

That man, even after the fall, possesses these two kinds of liberty, is evident from Holy Scripture. As to the liberty of contradiction, to do or not to do what is right, we have several texts to prove it: "God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel. He added his commandments and precepts. If thou wilt keep the commandments . . . forever, they shall preserve thee." (Eccl. xv, 14–16.) "He could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed, and could do evil things, and hath not done them." (Eccl. xxxi, 10.)

Many texts likewise prove the liberty of contrariety,—to do anything, and also to do the opposite: "Before man is life and death, good and evil: that which he shall choose shall be given unto him." (Eccl. xv, 18.) "But if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, you have your choice: choose this day whom you would rather serve, whether the gods," etc. (Jos. xxiv, 15.) "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Luke ix, 23.) "And I gave her time that she might do penance, and she will not repent." (Apoc. ii, 21.)

It is for the merit or demerit of man, that Almighty God endowed him with freedom to choose either good or evil: "Having no necessity," as St. Paul says, "but having the power of his own will." (1 Cor. vii, 37.) So that, as St. Augustine says, no human act can be sinful when it does not proceed from a free-will. "God judged," says this great doctor of grace, "that his servants would be better if they served him freely."

Indeed, when God made man, he might, by an act of his will, have decreed that human reason, like the stars, should forever obey him by an unvarying fixed law. But God has his complacency in the homage of our free-will, and so he made us *free* men, and not puppets, that nod the head and bend the knee as the wires are pulled. The Holy Scripture says of everything made by God: "And God saw that it was good." Man alone did not receive this praise, because he has it in his power to become bad; he is free to choose good or evil, to side with God or with the devil, to follow truth or falsehood, light or darkness—to embrace virtue or vice. It is from this twofold liberty that have risen, from the beginning of the world, two powers, two elements, continually combating each other—the good and the bad: the followers and children of God, and the adherents and friends of the devil.

Now, it is only the followers of God that enjoy true liberty. Liberty does not consist in being able to commit sin, to follow our passions, and thus go to hell; for, "if, in order to be free, it were necessary to be able to commit sin," says St. Anselm, "God and his angels would have no free-will: but such an assertion would be absurd." God is supreme liberty, and can do all things; yet he cannot sin. Again, no rational creatures enjoy a greater liberty than the angels and saints in heaven; they partake of the liberty of God, and therefore cannot sin. To be under the power of sin, is no power or mark of liberty; it is rather a mark of weakness and misery, not of perfection. To be under the power of sin, implies the possibility of becoming a slave of sin and of the devil. The more we are under the power of sin, the less free we are; and, were we to remain under the power of sin and of our passions, we would necessarily become for all eternity the vile slaves of the devil in hell.

Ask a man whose heart is set on earthly gain,—ask him what he thinks of those who renounce all to follow Christ and purchase heaven; ask him, I say, whether they do wisely? Certainly, he will answer, they do wisely. Ask him, again, why he himself does not do what he commends in others. He will answer: It is because I cannot. Why can you not? Because avarice will not let me. It is because he is not free; he is not master of himself, nor of what he possesses. If he is truly master of himself and of what he has, let him lay it out to his own advantage; let him exchange earthly for heavenly goods; if he cannot, let him confess that he is not his own master, but a slave to his money.

The celebrated Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, had, out of affection for Abbé Rancé, founder of La Trappe, a beautiful crib erected at the chapel of the Trappist. It was Christmas-eve. The bishop, pleased with the work, called the workmen together in order to pay them. They stood before a covered table. The bishop threw back the cloth and said, with a pleasant smile: "It is Christmas-eve. I have resolved to make each one of you a little present, but I wish you to choose for yourselves. Here is a gold piece, and here is a good book. Now, take whichever you prefer." The first workman immediately took the gold piece without scarcely deigning to look at the book. "I never read much anyhow," said he; "books are of very little use to me." The second workman did the same, remarking that with the gold he could buy a warm coat for the winter. The third man took the gold also, saying that he needed it to buy fuel for the winter.

The fourth workman, the youngest of all, now came. He looked wistfully at the book, and then at the gold. At last he said: "My old mother at home is poor and blind. It is true, the money would help her for a while, but after all it would be soon spent. My mother is pious, and I am sure she would rather have a good book. I can read to her out of it during the long winter evenings. I will take the book for my poor old mother." The bishop was moved to tears as he heard the words of the pious young man. The young man took the book, opened it to see the title, and what was his astonishment to find on the very title-page—six gold pieces! He had thus six times more than his companions, and a good book besides. The other workmen bent their heads, ashamed and vexed at themselves. The bishop now opened each of the three remaining books. Each one contained six bright gold pieces! Oh, how disappointed the greedy workmen felt! "See, my friends!" said the bishop kindly, "I wished to see whether you preferred the goods of earth to the goods of heaven. Three of you, I am sorry to say, have done so. You forgot the words of our Lord and Saviour,—words of living truth: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all the rest will be given to you.' (Matt. vi, 23.) Blessed be the mother that teaches such principles to her children! Blessed that Christian who always remembers and practises this sublime lesson!" The three workmen withdrew to meditate on the lesson they had received, and the virtuous young man knelt down to receive the bishop's blessing for himself and his mother. (Hungari.) It is clear that these three greedy young men, by setting more value on temporal than on spiritual goods, showed that they were not so free as the other young man, who chose the spiritual instead of the temporal goods.

We have been created to enjoy the supreme happiness of God in heaven, on condition that we do the will of God on earth. Therefore, the greatness of our liberty is in proportion to the power which we have of willing and of doing what God commands. The greater this power of our will is, the more liberty we enjoy.

There is one. He makes the vow of chastity. What induces him to make this vow is the hope that, by the grace of God, he will be master of himself, so that he can practise this virtue.

There is another. He cannot make this vow. What prevents him from making it, is the fact that he does not consider himself sufficiently master of himself to be able to keep the vow. It is therefore clear that he who makes the vow has greater power over himself than the other who does not make it, because he does what he wishes to do, and does what he believes he ought to do. But it is precisely in this that liberty consists. For the liberty which the other retains for himself is rather a subjection, nay, even a slavery, than liberty, because in reality, like a slave, he obeys his passion, which has the mastery over him, and drags him into sin; for he who is overcome is a slave to him who has overcome him (2 Pet. ii, 19): wherefore, "whosoever sins is a slave of sin." (John viii, 34.) The more, then, the power of sin is lessened in a man, the more the possibility of slavery is lessened, and therefore the more free he becomes; and if this power of sin is entirely taken away in man, his liberty is perfect. "Our liberty," says St. Augustine, "is so much the greater, the less we can sin;" and St. Thomas adds: "He whose liberty is perfect cannot commit sin." St. Alphonsus says the same. (Lib. ii, Tract. Pracamb., n. xxxiii: ed. P. Heilig.)

Now, the grace of God enables us to hate, to detest, and to avoid sin; it strengthens our will to do what God commands, and it inflames our hearts with love for God and everything that gives him pleasure; and thus it lessens in us the power of sin, and thereby increases our liberty, and makes it gradually more perfect.

"Man, after the fall," says St. Augustine, "is undoubtedly no longer free, without grace, either to begin or bring to perfection any act conducive to eternal life. But, by the grace of God, he recovers this liberty; for the strength which he needs to do what is good is granted him by grace through the merits of Jesus Christ. This grace restores his liberty to him, and gives him strength to work out his eternal salvation, without, however, compelling him to do so." (Lib. ii, con. ii, Epist. Pelag., c. 5.)

Now, to be able, by the grace of God, to avoid sin and to do good, is to be truly free; but not to be able to do so, is to be a child of sin and misery, a slave of our passions and of the devil. Good Catholics, who, by the grace of God, believe and practise the truths of the Roman Catholic Church, are the children of light and of true liberty; whilst unbelievers and heretics are the slaves of the darkness of error and their passions, for they do not enjoy the liberty of the children of God. Hence, when the tyrant said to St. Agatha, "You are born of noble and illustrious parents. Why, then, are you not ashamed to follow that low and contemptible life of the Christians?" the holy virgin most wisely replied: "The most illustrious nobility and liberty is to be a faithful servant of Christ." Yes, "only he," says St. Augustine, "is truly free, who does God's will in a perfect manner; and who, instead of abusing his liberty to commit sin, uses it only to do good and please God in all things." (Tract. 91, in Joan.; and, L. de Quant. Animæ, c. xxxiv.)

§ 14.—WHAT CO-OPERATION WITH GRACE IS.

11. What is it to co-operate with grace?
It is to avoid sin, and to do good, in spite of all natural repugnance.

We have seen that, in order to be saved, it is necessary that God should anticipate man by his grace, and continue to assist him in completing the work of his salvation. God, however, wishes that the sinner who has attained the age of reason should consent to his grace and coöperate with it; that is, should act according to the impulse of grace, allow himself to be drawn by it to do the good to which it inclines him, to avoid the evil from which it seeks to turn him, and to yield to its sweet influence. "Do you wish to be restored to health?" asked our dear Saviour of the paralytic in the Gospel of St. John (chap. v). Such is the respect with which God treats our liberty. Do you wish it? We may say, yes; or we may say, no. "He who created you without you,"—that is, without any coöperation on your part,—says St. Augustine, "will not justify you without you,"—that is, without your will and coöperation. There is no forcing of grace; and even under the impulse of its most powerful influence the will can still resist. Thus we are always in our own hands. In re-forming his own work, God does not destroy it. He comes to the help of man without annihilating the privileges of his free-will, which he granted him at his creation, and which makes him the arbiter of his own destiny. It is thus that, by the right use of our free-will, anticipated and assisted by grace, we are able to merit heaven as a reward. It is thus that our dear Lord, in his goodness and wisdom, has provided, at the same time, for our weakness and dignity; it is thus that he treats us with as much respect as love, and knows how to unite the interests of our happiness and glory. For, if God saved us without our coöperation, how could heaven be the reward of our labors, the crown of merit, the triumph of the conqueror? Undoubtedly, the reward won by laborious service is more honorable and glorious than that which is obtained by blind necessity. A victory without danger is a triumph without glory. Thus, of justification and of all our supernatural actions, what St. Paul says is true: "Not I, but the grace of God with me." Not I alone have done this or that good work, but I have done it with the help of God's grace.

§ 15.—OBLIGATION OF CO-OPERATING WITH GRACE.

12. Are we bound to co-operate with the grace of God? *Yes; for every man will be judged according to the measure of grace he has received.*

By this grace with which we must coöperate, we are not to understand that habitual grace which sanctifies the soul, but the actual, anticipating, and helping grace which enables us to do what is good. No doubt, all the good we do is the work of divine grace. Almighty God excites us by his anticipating grace, and helps us by his assisting grace, to accomplish what is good; but, at the same time, he exhorts us to coöperate with his grace as much as we can. "Be converted to me." (Zach. i, 3.) "Make unto yourselves a new heart." (Ezech. xviii, 31.) "Mortify, therefore, your members . . . stripping yourselves of the old man, with his deeds, and putting on the new." (Col. iii, 5.) God also reproves those who refuse to obey his call: "I called, and you refused." (Prov. i, 24.) "How often would I have gathered together thy children, . . . and thou wouldst not." (Matt. xxiii, 37.) "You always resist the Holy Ghost." (Acts vii, 51.) All these divine calls and reproofs would be vain and unjust, if God did everything regarding our eternal salvation, without any coöperation on our part. But such is not the case. The greater part of whatever good we do, belongs to God. But still it is his will that we labor ourselves, as far as we can; and hence St. Paul says: "I have labored more abundantly than all they; yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (1 Cor. xv, 10.) Mark this well: "The grace of God with me." Now, what should urge us to coöperate with grace is its unspeakable value: "Man knoweth not the price thereof." (Job xxviii, 13.) The smallest degree of grace is of infinite value. First of all, every grace comes to us directly from God himself. It is the Holy Ghost who speaks to us, who enlightens us, who consoles and strengthens us, who urges us to do good and avoid evil. Now, the greater the giver is, the more valuable is also his gift. As the giver of every grace is the Lord of infinite majesty, the least of his gifts must be considered to be of infinite value.

The value of grace is also infinite on account of the fruits which it brings forth,—fruits of eternal life. The light of the sun is but a feeble image of the light of grace. It is this heavenly light which causes every virtue to bloom in our soul, and bring forth a hundred-fold.

It is by grace that the sinner rises from the grave of sin, and lives again the life of God. It is also by means of God's grace that the just man preserves in his heart the love of God. It is by grace that he increases his merits in this life, and his glory in the next. "The acquisition of grace," says Holy Scripture, "is better than the heaping up of silver and gold. He that has found grace has found the tree of life, and he that perseveres in grace is blessed." (Prov. iii.) The Gentiles, who were deprived of the light of faith, deemed it impossible for man to become the friend of God; and, speaking according to the light of nature, they reasoned justly, because friendship can only exist among equals; or, as St. Jerome says, "Friendship either finds or makes equals." But God has often declared that, by his grace, we become his friends if we observe his law: "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you: I will not now call you servants, but I have called you friends." (John xv, 14.) "O wonderful condescension of the goodness of God!" exclaims St. Gregory. "We are not worthy to be called slaves, and we are called friends!"

How happy would he consider himself who had the good fortune to have his king for his friend! But it would be temerity in a subject to pretend to form a friendship with his prince. However, it is no temerity in a soul to aspire to the friendship of God. St. Augustine relates that, one day, two courtiers paid a visit to a monastery of hermits. One of them took up the Life of St. Anthony the Abbot. He read, and, as he read, his heart became gradually detached from worldly affections. Then, turning to his companion, he said to him: "What are we seeking? Can we ever expect more than to be the friends of the emperor? And should we aim at something higher, through how many dangers and trials must we pass to obtain it! And, after having obtained it, how long will it last? Fools that we are, can we hope in the service of the emperor to obtain anything more than his friendship? And now, even suppose we obtain it, do we not thereby expose our eternal salvation to great danger? But it is not likely that we shall ever succeed in becoming the friends of Cæsar. If, however, we wish to become the friends of God, we can obtain his friendship this very moment." Whoever, then, profits by the grace of God, becomes his friend; nay, more, he even becomes his child: "Behold! you are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High." (Ps. lxxxi, 6.)

Such great things has Jesus Christ merited for us by his passion. He has communicated to us the same splendor which he received from his heavenly Father: "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them." (John xvii, 22.) Now, not to profit by these precious gifts would be to despise Jesus Christ and all he has done for us. Such contempt of divine grace would deserve everlasting punishment in hell: "And the unprofitable servant cast ye into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. xxv, 30.)

That, however, which, perhaps, more than anything else, should cause us to profit by the grace of God, is the consideration that each grace is most wonderfully connected with another grace, and depends on it: "Thou hast arranged all things according to number, weight, and measure," says the Wise Man, when speaking of the sins of the Egyptians (Wisd. xi, 21); and he shows that the Lord punished them, not according to the weight, but according to the measure, of their sins. In like manner, the book of Proverbs says: "The judgments of God are weighed and measured." (Prov. xvi, 11.) There is a certain number and measure of sins preordained for every one of us to be forgiven: now, as every sin includes an abuse of grace, it follows that there is destined for each one of us a certain measure of graces in order to work out our salvation. If we neglect a decisive grace, another grace, perhaps, will be granted to us; perhaps even a third and a fourth; perhaps even more graces. But how many graces we shall receive, we cannot tell; for no one knows where God's infinite mercy ends in our regard, and where his infinite justice begins. God's grace is, indeed, infinite in itself, but we are not infinitely capable to receive it: "With God is mercy and wrath: he has power to pardon, and power to pour out his just anger. He deals out his just punishment according to his mercy. I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matt. xi, 24).

There is, however, one grace, which is the last. If the sinner neglects it, then the gate of mercy is forever closed against him: he receives no more special light or graces.

It is true that such an unhappy sinner may still work out his salvation with the ordinary graces which God bestows upon every one, but he generally does not. Then follows a reprobate sense. The understanding becomes darkened, the will grows weak and stubborn to good, the heart is hardened. We no longer see our danger, we care not for God's threats, we are as insensible as a corpse. When the impious man falls into the depths of iniquity, says Holy Scripture, he despises and laughs at everything sacred, at the most serious warnings and menaces of God, at eternal torments. All seems to him imposture; he grows bolder as he goes on, and even rejoices in the evil he commits. Melted wax resumes its hardness when it is removed from the fire, because it is no longer exposed to the heat of the fire, which caused it to melt. In like manner, by putting off our conversion, we place our understanding and our will in so dangerous a state, that they are no longer sensible to the impressions of grace, which they formerly received so easily. By opposing the movements of grace, we become too weak to be able to obey those movements when they come, even though they should of themselves be strong enough to touch the heart. What a fearful thing it is to persist in resisting the grace of God!

St. Bonaventure relates that a rich man named Gedeon, who led a very disorderly life, was attacked with a most dangerous illness, of which it was expected he would die. He had recourse to St. Francis, who by his prayers cured him, and at the same time warned him to change his life, lest something worse should befall him. This sickness, this miraculous restoration of health, this wholesome warning, were three graces from God to him for his salvation; but the unhappy man abused them. No sooner had he recovered his strength than he relapsed into his former disorders. But, by a just chastisement of God, it happened that, while he was asleep in his bed, the roof of his house suddenly fell in, and he awoke in the eternal flames of hell.

Let us bear in mind, however, that a decisive grace is not always attached to a great or difficult action or sacrifice. It is not always necessary that the abuse of such a decisive grace should be a mortal sin. The conversion to a Christian life, the call to the religious state, a second conversion to a life of fervor and perfection, final perseverance, and a happy death,—all these extraordinary graces depend often upon some little act of obedience, some slight act of self-denial. History tells us of great sinners who obtained the extraordinary grace of conversion on their death-bed, because, during life, they had performed some act of charity or virtue. This single act weighed more in the balance of divine mercy than the enormous load of a long life of sin. Now, had they not performed that one virtuous act, had they resisted that one grace, they would probably have been lost. There are examples of persons who were called to the religious life, but who refused to follow the call of God. They were unwilling to make the sacrifice God required of them. Afterward, they fell into the greatest crimes, and finally died an unhappy death. Now, these unhappy beings did not commit a mortal sin in disobeying the call of God, for no one is obliged under pain of sin to follow the Evangelical Counsels; nevertheless they were lost because they did not correspond faithfully with the grace of God. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how inscrutable his ways!" (Rom. xi, 33.)

Let us, therefore, not neglect the grace that urges us to make some sacrifice, some act of self-denial for God. No grace stands alone. Every grace is a link in the great chain of graces, whose beginning and end are known to God alone. Each grace, if we use it well, will bring us other graces. It is, as it were, a fruit which contains also the seed of other fruits. Though the grace that is offered to us this moment, urges us to do, perhaps, only a trifling act of virtue, nevertheless we do not know what relation it has to the other graces that God has in store for us. We do not know what part it forms in the great chain of graces upon which depends our salvation. Is this chain of graces once broken, we shall find it hard to unite it again: "Take heed, lest any of you abuse the grace of God." (Heb. xii, 15.) Take heed lest any of you become a reprobate like Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and afterward, though he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. He found no room for repentance, even though he sought it with tears. "We cannot," says St. Alphonsus, "shed tears enough to obtain a second grace, if we have wilfully neglected the first."

Let us bear this truth in mind, especially in the time of temptation. Let us think of the inestimable value of even the least grace; let us think of the love of God, who has, from all eternity, destined for us the grace to overcome just this temptation; let us bear in mind the reward of unalterable glory that awaits us if we conquer. Perhaps this grace is the beginning of innumerable graces; perhaps it is a decisive grace,—one on which our perseverance and eternal happiness depend. That I should obey my superior in this point which is so contrary to my natural desires; that I should sacrifice my own views in this matter, and submit my judgment to that of another, even though I cannot agree with him; that I should take up just this cross that seems to me intolerable; that I should mortify my curiosity, my vanity, or sensual gratification, just in this instance,—it is perhaps this act of fidelity to his grace that God intends to reward with the gift of a perfect life, and the crowning grace of final perseverance. If, on the contrary, I neglect this grace, I shall perhaps lose my birthright to heaven for a trifle as contemptible as the mess of pottage of Esau.

Let us not imagine that there is question only of rare and extraordinary occasions. Nobody loses the grace of God suddenly. This loss is always preceded by slight, continued infidelities. "There will be two in the same field," says our Lord Jesus Christ, "and one of them will be taken, and the other will be left. There will be two grinding at the same mill, and one of them will be taken, and the other will be left." (Matt. xxiv, 40.) Two persons enter the same state of life, receive the same spiritual training, the very same means of sanctification; and yet one only will remain faithful to the end of his vocation, and the other will not remain: one will be taken, and the other will be left.

Abraham will be blessed forever, for having been faithful to the voice of God commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac; whilst Saul will be a reprobate forever, for not having obeyed, on one occasion, the voice of the Lord.

What would have become of David, of St. Peter, of St. Mary Magdalen, had they not profited by the favorable opportunity, by the moment of grace, which was for them the moment of salvation? Happy would Jerusalem have been, had it still made a good use of the last day of grace which the Lord gave it. It was her day: "*In hac die tua:*"

"In this thy day." (Luke xix, 42.) But this indocile people shut their eyes in order not to see. They still resisted the impulses of grace, the tender invitations of God's mercy. They let the decisive moment pass away. Hence their blindness and their misfortune for all eternity: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee for thy salvation, how often have I wished, by my preaching, by my example, by my miracles, by my promises, by my threats, and by all possible means, to gather thy children, to draw them to myself with tenderness and affection, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings when she sees them pursued by a bird of prey, and thou wouldst not! To punish thine infidelity, I abandon thee to the fury of thine enemies. Thy habitation shall be made desolate." (Luke xix, 41.) Jesus says, "How often!"—behold the number of graces given for thy salvation: "Thou wouldst not!"—behold the refusal of man: "Thou shalt be deserted!"—behold his reprobation and chastisement.

§ 16.—EFFECTS OF SANCTIFYING GRACE.

13. What does sanctifying grace effect in our soul?

1. *It cleanses us from sin, makes us children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.* 2. *It makes our good works deserving of an eternal reward.*

How beautiful is nature in the pleasant summer-time! How different was the appearance of everything during the dreary months of winter! It seems, indeed, as if we were transported into another clime, into another world. In winter everything is so cold, so dead! At first, the woods and fields look so brown and bare, and then so ghastly white in their winding-sheet of snow! The leafless trees stretch forth their gaunt arms and moan in the chill night-wind, as if calling in vain for the bright days of summer. The birds have fled, their merry song no longer fills the air. The heavens look chill and ashen-grey; a few stray flakes are falling; it is even too cold to snow in earnest. The days are so short. The sun looks down a moment from his cloudy pavilion upon the wintry air, and shrouds himself again in dreamy silence. The wide earth stretches out lifeless and bare, shorn of all its flowers and verdure, like our altars on solemn Good-Friday, and the silent stars of the long wintry night gleam like the lamps around the holy sepulchre.

Ah! but now, how changed is every thing! The balmy summer breeze flies over the waving grain; and the bright flowers and the green leaves bend and lift their heads as if keeping time to the sweet strains of angel music. The heavens are blue,—so deeply, beautifully blue; and the few stray cloudlets float so calmly along, like crystal islets on a fathomless sea! The merry birds fill the air with sweetest music; and at times you feel as if heaven's gates were momentarily ajar, and a few of its ineffable strains came streaming down upon your ravished ear. Ah! how changed, indeed, from cold, dreary winter!

Now, what has brought about this change? It is simply because the sun pours down its golden rays longer and stronger upon the earth. Now, the sun is a symbol of the Holy Ghost. When bestowing sanctifying grace upon the soul, a far more wonderful change is wrought in the soul than is produced by the sun in nature. A soul deprived of sanctifying grace is like the dreary arctic regions—dark, frozen, and lifeless. Witness St. Paul, who, before his conversion, was a ravenous wolf, a cruel persecutor of the Christians. But see this same man after his conversion! He no longer deals perversely; he is no longer puffed up; he is no longer ambitious, seeking his own; he is no longer provoked to anger; he is patient, mild, and kind to everybody; he bears all things, he believes all things, he hopes all things, he endures all things. He rejoices in being deemed worthy to suffer for our Lord's sake. His soul is now like a beautiful landscape filled with fruits and flowers, verdure and sunshine.

At the moment in which sanctifying grace enters the soul, is fulfilled a remarkable prophecy uttered by God long ago: "I shall espouse thee forever, saith the Lord. I shall espouse thee in justice; I shall espouse thee in mercy; I shall espouse thee in faith." This prophecy was not then understood; but, when the Son of God came upon earth to reconcile poor sinners to his heavenly Father, to establish a new race,—a race of the just, then it was that this prophecy was not only understood, but fulfilled; and its fulfilment continues, and will continue to the end of time.

Now, this spiritual espousal takes place when God endows the soul with sanctifying grace. At the moment when we were baptized, or when, after having lost our baptismal innocence by sin, the priest absolved us from our sins, then a touching scene between God and our soul took place,—a scene like that which was witnessed by the servants of the good father when he went to meet his prodigal son: "And when the prodigal was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him" (O promptitude of pardon!), "fell upon his neck and kissed him" (O touching tenderness!), "and he said: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet" (O fulness of grace!), "and kill the fatted calf, and let us eat and make merry." O banquet of joy and gladness! When our heavenly Father ignored, as it were, our sins, to draw us to virtue and penance; when, in his mercy, he recalled us from the country of spiritual famine and misery; when he received us in baptism or confession, and embraced us in holy communion with unspeakable tenderness, ah! then it was that he clothed our souls with the first robe,—the robe of divine grace; then it was that he put on our hands a precious ring,—the ring of our birthright to heaven; then it was that he put shoes on our feet,—the merits of Christ's passion and death, and the liberty of the children of God, which we had lost by our folly. Then it was that he gave us the kiss of peace,—the consoling assurance that our heavy debts were cancelled and forgiven. Ah! then it was that the angels sounded, as it were, the jubilee-trumpet; we heard its joyous notes proclaiming rest to our wearied hearts, redemption to our spiritual captivity, grace and salvation to our erring souls. Ah! then our souls were the joyful guests at a great banquet; then we celebrated the year of the jubilee. Let us mark that year; let us mark the month of that year, and never forget the day, the hour, of that month when we were permitted "to go back to our family,"—to the number of the elect; when we were permitted "to return to our former possession,"—to the ownership of all the rights and privileges of the children of God. Oh! for the love of our heavenly Father, let us now be mindful of our dignity. We are children of God, heirs of heaven, spouses of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost. Yes, this is the dignity to which God has restored us by sanctifying grace.

It has been said, in a foregoing chapter, that there is, in God the Father, an infinite desire of communicating himself and all his goods. It has been said that in this love he generated, from all eternity, his only-begotten Son. This is undoubtedly the greatest act of his infinite love. But this heavenly Father still continues to beget, in time, children, who are by grace what the Son of God is by nature; so that our sonship bears the greatest resemblance to the divine Sonship. Hence St. Paul writes: "Whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren." (Rom. viii, 29.)

Behold the great things which divine love effects! We are the sons of God, as the Holy Scripture says: "Ye are the sons of the living God." (Osee i, 10.) In this divine adoption, there are infused into the soul, not only the grace, the charity, and other gifts of the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost himself, who is the first and uncreated gift that God gives to Christians.

In justifying and sanctifying us, God might infuse into our souls his grace and charity to such a degree only as would render us simply just and holy, without adopting us as his children. This grace of simple justification would, no doubt, be, in itself, a very great gift, it being a participation of the divine nature in a very high degree; so that, in all truth, we could exclaim with the Blessed Virgin: "*Fecit mihi magna, qui potens est*"—"He that is mighty has done great things to me." (Luke i, 49.)

But to give us only such a degree of grace and participation in his divine nature, is not enough for the love of God. The grace of adoption is bestowed upon us in so high a degree as to make us really children of God.

But even this measure of the grace of adoption might be bestowed upon us by God in such a manner only as to give, by it, no more than his charity, grace, and created gifts. This latter grace of adoption would, certainly, surpass the former, of simple justification, so that, in all truth, we might again exclaim with the Mother of God: "*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo*"—"He hath showed might in his arm." (Luke i, 51.)

But neither is this gift, great though it be, great enough for the love which God bears us. God, in his immense love for us, wishes to bestow greater things upon us, in order to raise us still higher in grace and in the participation in his divine nature. Hence he goes so far as to give himself to us, so that he may sanctify and adopt us in person.

The Holy Ghost unites himself to his gifts, his grace, and his charity, so that, when infusing these gifts into our souls, he infuses, together with them, himself really in person. On this account St. Paul writes: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." (Rom. v, 5.) On this account, the same apostle calls the Holy Ghost the Spirit of adoption. "For you have not received," says he, "the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption of children, whereby we cry: Abba, Father. For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, heirs also: heirs, indeed, of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii, 15.) And: "Whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God." (Gal. iv, 6.)

This divine charity and these graces are, no doubt, the height of God's love for us, and are also, at the same time, the height of our dignity and exaltation, because, on receiving these divine gifts, we receive, at the same time, the person of the Holy Ghost, who unites himself to these gifts, as has been said, and by them lives in us, adopts us, deifies us, and urges us on to the performance of every good work.

Truly, the love and liberality of God effect great things! But even this is not all: we receive still greater favors. In coming personally into the soul, the Holy Ghost is accompanied by the other divine persons also,—the Father and the Son,—from whom he cannot be separated. Therefore, in the act of justification, the three divine persons come personally and really into the soul, as into their temple, living and dwelling therein as long as the soul perseveres in the grace of God. For this reason St. John writes: "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv, 16.) St. Paul writes the same thing: "He who is joined to God is one spirit." (1 Cor. vi, 17.)

Jesus Christ obtained for us this grace, when he prayed on the eve of his passion: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name . . . that they may all be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." (John xvii, 11, 21.) Jesus Christ asks of his Father that all his followers may participate in the one and in the same Holy Ghost, so that, in him and through him, they may be united to the other divine persons. St. Bonaventure says that the just not only receive the gifts, but also the person, of the Holy Ghost. (1 Sent., d. 14, a. 2, 9, 1.) The same is taught by the renowned Master of Sentences (lib. i, dist. 14, 15), who quotes St Augustine and others in support of this doctrine. St. Thomas Aquinas asserts the same thing (i, p. 9, 43, a. 3, 6, 9, 38, art. 8), and proves that the grace of the Holy Ghost is a peculiar gift, because it is given to all the just. "Grace," says Suarez, "establishes a most perfect friendship between God and man; and such a friendship requires the presence of the friend, that is, the Holy Ghost, who stays in the soul of his friend, in order to unite himself most intimately with him, and reside in his soul, as in his temple, there to be honored, worshipped, and loved."

From what has been said, it follows:—

1. That the grace of adoption, or the grace of justification, by which we are sanctified and adopted as the children of God, is something more than a simple quality. It implies several things: the forgiveness of sins, faith, hope, charity, and other gifts, and even the Holy Ghost himself, the author of all gifts, and, as a necessary consequence, the whole Blessed Trinity. All this is infused into the soul in the act of justification, as the holy Church teaches. (Conc. Trid., Sess. 6, c. vii.)

2. It follows that, by this grace of adoption, we are raised to the highest dignity, namely, to the dignity of divine sonship; so that, in reality, we are the children of God,—yea, even gods, as it were, not only accidentally by grace, but also really by participation in the divine nature. Men consider it a great honor to have been adopted by some noble family; but our adoption by God is far nobler, far more honorable. Adopted children receive nothing of the nature of their adoptive father. They inherit only his name and his temporal goods; but we receive from God his grace, and, with his grace, his nature. For this reason, God is called the Father, not only of Christ, but also of us; because, through grace, he communicates to us his nature, which he has communicated to Christ by

hypostatic union, thus making us the brethren of his divine Son. St. Paul writes: "Whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born amongst *many brethren.*" (Rom. viii, 29.) And St. John says in his Gospel: "He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name, who are born not of blood . . . but of God" (i, 12).

3. By this grace of adoption, we receive an undisputed title to the possession of heaven, because we are the children of God: heaven, therefore, is our inheritance.

4. By this grace of adoption, the soul is most intimately united to the Holy Ghost, and thereby elevated far above herself, and, as it were, deified. By thus communicating himself, God raises the just man, as it were, to a level with himself, transforming him into himself, thus making him, as it were, divine. Love enraptures the loving soul, raises her above her, unites her to the beloved, and transforms her into him, so that, being, as it were, embodied in him, she lives, feels, and rejoices in him alone.

5. From this grace of adoption, all our works and merits derive their admirable dignity. This adoption of children of God confers upon all our works the greatest dignity and value, making them truly deserving of eternal reward; since they proceed, as it were, from God himself, and from his divine Spirit, who lives in us, and urges us on to the performance of good works.

6. This adoption, which begins here below by grace, will be rendered most perfect in heaven, where we enter upon the possession of God, who will communicate himself really to our souls in a manner most intimate and ineffable. On this account St. John says: "Behold the tabernacle

of God with men, and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people: and God himself with them shall be their God. He that shall overcome, shall possess these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

So beautiful, then, in the sight of God is a soul in the state of sanctifying grace, that the Lord himself cannot help praising it. "How beautiful art thou," says he of such a soul,—"how beautiful art thou!" (Cant. iv, 1.) He appears to be unable to take his eyes off that soul, or to close his ears against anything it may ask of him: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears unto their prayers." (Ps. xxxiii, 16.) St. Bridget used to say that no one could behold the beauty of a soul in the grace of God without dying of joy. St. Catharine of Sienna, when seeing a soul in the state of grace, declared that she would willingly have given her life to prevent that soul from losing such a beauty. She used to kiss the ground over which the priests of God had passed, considering that they had power from God to restore men to the inestimable gift of divine grace.

§ 17.—LIVING, MORTIFIED, REVIVED, AND DEAD WORKS.

14. Are, then, good works, performed in mortal sin, without any value before God?

Good works cannot merit an eternal reward, but they help the soul to receive the grace of conversion, and often avert temporal punishments.

We have just seen that, by sanctifying grace, God restores us to that likeness of himself which we lost in Adam, imprinting upon our soul a fixed quality, in virtue of which we are truly his friends, his children, and the heirs of the kingdom of heaven. This state of friendship, of adoption, and of holiness, is preparatory to a state of glory in heaven, and is called *habitual grace*, because it is given to remain in us as long as we do not commit any mortal sin. Now, whilst we are in this happy state of grace, God keeps an account of all our works, in order that, in heaven, he may bestow upon them a reward such as no eye has seen, no ear heard, and which has never entered into man's heart to conceive. Such works are called by theologians *living works*, because, prompted, as they are, by charity and performed in charity, they have in them the principle of eternal life,—the life of grace.

Should we, however, have lived for a hundred years in the practice of the most rigorous penance, and have acquired the virtue and merits of the greatest saints in heaven, we lose sanctifying grace and the merit of all our good works at the moment we commit a mortal sin. This is no exaggeration. God himself declares it to us in the plainest terms: "If the just man forsake the path of justice and commit sin, I shall no longer remember his good works, saith the Lord." (Ezech. xviii, 2.)

As a severe frost deprives tender plants of all verdure and vitality, so does mortal sin strip good works of their life, that is, of all that made them pleasing to God and meritorious of heaven; and therefore they are called *mortified works.* These works, however, may revive, as the chilled plants revive in spring. Then they become and are called *revived* works,—renewed and restored to life. This happens when we rise from the state of sin to the state of grace. Then it is, says St. Francis de Sales, that all our works, which were withered by sin, revive and resume their former vigor and freshness.

But mortal sin not only deprives us of sanctifying grace and of the merit of all our good works, it also places us in a state in which we cannot earn even a single merit for heaven. By our good works we may, indeed, be helped to obtain the grace of conversion, but we shall receive no reward for them in the other life. We may perform as many good works as were performed by the greatest saints that ever lived; yet, as long as we remain in mortal sin, we shall receive no reward for them in heaven, because there is no proportion between eternal life and works disconnected from grace. Such works are called *dead works*, because they have neither foundation nor root in charity. Although of a moral and natural goodness, yet they are, as St. Gregory says, branches which cannot bear any fruit before God, not being connected with the root of charity. It is only by grace that our works are rendered valuable and deserving of an everlasting reward; for works performed in the state of grace proceed, as it were, from God himself, and from his divine Spirit, who lives in us, and urges us on to the performance of good works.

Here some one may say: "I know I am a great sinner. I have been living in mortal sin for some considerable time. Now, if by all my prayers and good works, I cannot gain anything meritorious of heaven, then they are quite useless. Why, then, should I continue any longer to pray and to do good to my fellow-men?" This manner of arguing is very wrong. To say that we cannot obtain a reward in heaven for good works performed in the state of mortal sin, is one thing; and it is another to say that such works are useless. That such works do not deserve a reward in heaven, is an infallible truth; but to imagine that they are useless, is utterly false.

There is a bad Catholic. He has not been to confession and holy communion for several years. However, he has said some prayers every day, and went to Mass on days of obligation. Now, I ask: Is it useless for him to pray and to go to Mass, because he performs these good works in the state of mortal sin? By no means; for, were he to neglect these good works, which are of obligation, he would become still more guilty in the sight of God. Almighty God takes a certain pleasure in the sinner for complying with his Christian duty of praying and hearing Mass, and rewards him for it in this world, either by prolonging his life and preparing him for the grace of conversion, or by increasing his temporal goods, or by averting certain temporal punishments, and so forth. Hence, St. Alphonsus says: "No sinner should ever give up prayer, as otherwise he would be lost forever. God would send many a sinner sooner to hell if he ceased praying; yet, on account of his perseverance in prayer, he still spares him."

It should, then, be borne in mind that, as long as the sinner does not sin unto death,—that is, if he has not the will to live and die in sin, but desires to amend his life, and prays for this grace,—God will listen to his prayer and hear it, if he perseveres in his petition. His prayer, it is true, is not heard on account of his meritorious works, for he does not possess any; but it is heard on account of the merits of Jesus Christ, and because our divine Saviour has promised to hear every one that asks. "Therefore," says St. Thomas, "when we pray, it is not necessary to be friends of God in order to obtain the grace we ask, for prayer itself restores us to his friendship." "The desire of the sinner to escape from sin," says St. Bernard, "is a gift from God, who would not give this desire to the sinner, unless he intended to hear him." Witness the publican, who went into the temple to pray, and returned to his house justified. (Luke viii, 13, 14.) Thus prayer, though performed by the sinner in the state of mortal sin, far from being useless, is, on the contrary, very useful, nay, even necessary, to obtain the grace of conversion.

And what is true of prayer, is, also, more or less true of other good works, such as fasting, alms, etc. Almighty God commanded the Prophet Jonas to announce to the Ninevites that, within forty days, their city would be destroyed. The Ninevites at once began to fast and pray, and ask pardon. And God did not inflict upon them the punishment with which he had threatened them.

The servant of a family receives but a certain temporal reward for his services, whilst the children of the family are the heirs to all the goods of their parents. In like manner, all those who, by mortal sin or want of true faith, are separated from God, receive from him but certain temporal rewards for their naturally good works; whilst those who, by grace and good works, are the children of God, are the heirs to all the goods of their heavenly Father.

It is, no doubt, a sad spectacle to behold the good conduct and character of many non-Catholics. They make long prayers, they fast, give alms, and practise other natural virtues. They are sometimes so tender, so active and untiring in their benevolence; they seem to be so wise and so considerate, and to have so much in them to engage the affections of those who see them! But all these works of natural goodness lack one essential requisite, viz.: they do not proceed from the grace of true faith, without which there is neither merit nor recompense. Where grace is not, there, without doubt, every good action has its reward in this world for such good as is in it, but it has no claim to a heavenly reward. For merely natural virtues there are only merely natural rewards.

Hence, as faith without good works is dead, so, also, works without faith are dead, and cannot save the doer from destruction. Splendid, but barren works! apparently delicious fruit, but rotten within! In vain, then, shall they glory in these works. The gospel will always tell them that he "who does not believe, is always judged." (John iii, 18.) The apostle will ever declare to them that "without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. xi, 6.) Jesus Christ himself will ever command us to look upon "him as the heathen and the publican who will not hear the Church" (Matt. xviii, 17), though, otherwise, he should be as severe in his life as an anchoret, as enlightened in his understanding as an angel. "In the Catholic Church," says St. Augustine, "there are both good and bad. But they who are separated from her, as long as they remain in their opinion against her, cannot be good; for, although a kind of laudable conversation seems to show forth some of them as good, the separation itself makes them bad, the Lord saying: 'He who is not with me is against me; and he who gathereth not with me, scattereth.'" (Ep. ccviii, n. 6, col. 1177.)

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," says St. Paul, "and have not charity,"—that is, the grace of God,—"I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. . . . And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity,"—that is, am not in the grace of God,—"it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii, 1–4.)

What, then, will be the astonishment, sorrow, and despair of those who, void of faith, and separate from the Church, will one day present themselves before God, and, imagining that they have heaped up treasures of merits, will appear in his sight with their hands empty?

§ 18.—HOW SANCTIFYING GRACE IS INCREASED.

15. Can sanctifying grace be increased in the soul?

Yes; by frequently receiving the sacraments, and by performing good works.

The life of the soul is the state of its acceptableness or friendship with God; and that which renders it acceptable to God is sanctifying grace. Now, that must needs be something great and precious which can render us, sinful creatures as we are, truly pleasing to God. What must be the value of sanctifying grace which can work such a transformation? What is it, and who can declare its price? St. Thomas tells us that the lowest degree of sanctifying grace is worth more than all the riches of the world. Think, then, of all the riches of this world! The mines of gold, the precious stones, the forests of costly wood, and all the hidden stores of wealth, for the least of which treasures the children of this world are willing to toil, and struggle, and sin, for a whole lifetime. Again, consider that the lowest degree of sanctifying grace outweighs all those riches.

Even among the many spiritual gifts that God bestows on his children, there is none that can be compared to the precious gift of the lowest degree of sanctifying grace. Let us take, for instance, sensible devotion, revelations, ecstasies, the power of working miracles, etc. Now, all these extraordinary gifts are far less precious than even the smallest degree of sanctifying grace. For, all these gifts do not, of themselves, make us better, or holier, or more pleasing to God. They increase neither our merits in this life, nor our glory in the next. They may, indeed, serve to glorify God and to edify our neighbor, but they are often of little advantage to him who has received them. Of this St. Paul assures us, in his Epistle to the Corinthians. After speaking of such wonderful gifts, he says: "Strive, however, after better gifts, to which I shall show you a more perfect way." (1 Cor. xii, 31.) Now, these gifts are those of divine charity and grace.

What great value should we, then, set on those means by which sanctifying grace is increased, and the soul rendered more beautiful in the sight of God! Now, this grace, which was merited for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, is infused into the soul by the Holy Ghost through the sacraments: but each sacrament does not confer it in the same manner. Baptism and penance bestow it upon those who are not in the state of grace; baptism being the means appointed for those who have never been in the grace of God, and penance, for those who have lost it. These sacraments are, therefore, called *sacraments of the dead*, as being instituted for the benefit of those who are in mortal sin, or dead to grace. When these sacraments are received with the right dispositions, they truly reconcile the sinner with God, so that, from being an enemy of God, he becomes his friend, and an object of his complacency. But this acceptance, though true and real, is not in the highest degree; it admits of an increase, as the Holy Scripture says: "Let him that is just be justified still; and let him that is holy be sanctified still;" and, therefore, God appointed the other sacraments, *the sacraments of the living*, not only to convey special graces peculiar to each, but to impart an *increase of sanctifying grace* to those who are already in his favor. A rich man, when he has taken possession of a field which he wishes to convert into a garden, is not content with putting a wall around it, and clearing it of the most noxious weeds, and setting it in good order; but he continues to cultivate it assiduously, to fill it with the most beautiful plants, and to embellish it with new and choice ornaments. Thus Almighty God, in his love and goodness, has multiplied means by which the soul may be enriched with the graces and merits of Jesus Christ, and become more and more agreeable and beautiful in his eyes.

Now, among all these means, there is none greater or more powerful than the Blessed Eucharist. Each time that we receive our Saviour in holy communion, we participate anew in all the merits of his redemption, of his poverty, his hidden life, his scourging, and his crowning with thorns. The Holy Eucharist, then, differs from the other sacraments in this, that, while the other sacraments bestow upon us one or the other fruit of Christ's merits, it gives us the grace and merits of our Saviour in their source. The soul, therefore, receives an immense increase of sanctifying grace at each communion. In holy communion, sanctifying grace is poured in great abundance upon the soul. The King of Heaven is then present in the soul, scattering profusely his benedictions, and making it taste of the powers of the world to come. If any one of us were to see his own soul immediately after a worthy communion, how amazed and confounded would he be at the sight of it! He would believe it to be an angel.

But it is not in our power to receive the sacraments as often as we might wish, in order to obtain an increase of sanctifying grace; God, therefore, in his infinite goodness, has willed that the performance of good works should be another means of increasing sanctifying grace in our soul. Hence, by every fervent prayer, by every act of faith, of hope, of charity, of contrition, of self-denial, performed for the love of God; by every cross and affliction endured for the sake of Jesus Christ; by every victory over the flesh, the world, and the devil; by every good intention in the performance of our actions, sanctifying grace is increased in our souls, and we are rendered more pleasing to God. By every good work we gain more and more upon what is bad in our hearts; we bring God more and more into them, and we come nearer to that heavenly state in which they will be altogether "without spot or wrinkle," holy and without blemish. Should we not, then, esteem the sacraments and the performance of good works more highly than anything else in this world?

St. Teresa, after her death, appeared to one of her sisters in religion, and told her that all the saints in heaven, without exception, would be willing to come back to this world and to remain here till the end of time, suffering all the miseries to which our mortal life is subject, only to gain one more degree of sanctifying grace, and the eternal glory corresponding to it.

§ 19.—OBLIGATION OF PERFORMING GOOD WORKS.

16. Are we obliged to perform good works?

Yes; for, "every tree that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire." (Matt. iii, 10.)

Luther and Calvin taught that, not only the works of infidels and sinners were of no use, but that even works performed by the just are all sins, or, at least, vitiated by sin. This blasphemy of Luther and Calvin was properly condemned by the fathers of the Council of Trent. (Sess. 6, Can. xxii.) How blind is the human understanding when it has lost the light of faith! How can good works possibly be sinful, since Christ exhorts us to perform them? "Let your light," he says, "shine before men, that they may see your good works." (Matt. v, 16.) Good works are not sins; on the contrary, they are pleasing to God, and without them we cannot be saved. Nothing is clearer than Holy Scripture on this point: "Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father." (Matt. vii, 21.) To do the will of God is to do good works: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. xix, 17.) On the day of judgment God will say to the wicked: "Depart from me, ye accursed." And why? "For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink." (Matt. xxv, 42.) "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but no works? Shall faith be able to save him?" (James ii, 14.) "Every tree that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."

From these passages of Holy Scripture it is evident that good works are necessary for salvation, and that faith alone is not sufficient. Indeed, a Christian without good works is like a tree without fruits, a field without produce, a lamp without oil. His faith is sterile, and this sterility is a kind of iniquity which renders a Christian very culpable. The fig-tree which produced no fruit was cursed and burned. The talent was taken from him who hid it in the earth. Those who do not practise what they believe will soon cease to believe that which they do not perform. Faith does not long exist in the soul when the fruitful life of charity is extinguished. Those who do nothing believe nothing. Those who believe, and do not practise what they believe, will be more severely punished than those who have no faith.

§ 20.—WHAT GOOD WORKS WE SHOULD PERFORM.

17. What kind of good works should we chiefly perform?

1, *Those works enjoined upon us by the commandments;* 2, *those recommended in Holy Scripture, such as praying, fasting, and almsgiving.*

By sanctifying grace the soul is grafted on Jesus Christ. This divine life cannot be inactive: "He that abideth in me, and I in him," says Christ, "the same beareth much fruit." (John xv, 5.) These fruits are called good works.

In autumn, the farmer sows seed in his field. In the winter of frost and snow, nobody can see the seeds, because they are in the ground. Early in the spring, the sun becomes warmer, and the snow melts. Then many beautiful little green stalks come up out of the ground. At first, we see only their small green heads. As the weather grows warmer, the green stalks grow higher. Then comes the hot sunshine of the summer. The stalks are now very high, and the color has changed from green to yellow, almost like gold. On the top of each stalk there are many fine little yellow grains of wheat. Then the farmer comes to cut down the wheat, and fills his barn with it.

Every one of us must do what the farmer does. We must sow seed,—the seed of good works during this present life, for God has willed that after death our condition should be fixed. As the tree falls, so shall it lie; and of those who die in the Lord, it is said that they cease from their labors and their works do follow them; so that neither the souls in purgatory, nor the blessed in heaven, can gain anything whereby to increase their eternal happiness. We should, therefore, multiply our good works to increase our merits, and to embellish our heavenly crown; we should multiply them, for they glorify God and edify our neighbor. We must, above all, perform the works of obligation, that is, those enjoined upon all Christians by the commandments of God and of the Church; and those which are necessary or useful to fulfil the duties of our state of life. To do all that the commandments of God and of the Church, and the duties of our state of life, require of us, is to make a chain of good works which reaches from earth to heaven.

To these good works of obligation we should add those which are recommended in Holy Scripture, such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. By prayer we understand every exercise of piety and devotion, such as the hearing of Mass, the receiving of the sacraments, the reading of pious books, the meditating upon the sufferings of Christ, the listening to the explanation of the Christian doctrine, the walking in the presence of God, and the making of ejaculatory prayers. That, indeed, must be an excellent good work, the practice of which keeps up our relations with God. Now, prayer is an universal and infallible means of maintaining those relations. The first is our dependence on God's goodness. By prayer, we acknowledge our dependence on God. As the subjects of a king acknowledge their dependence on their sovereign, by paying the taxes he lays upon them; so also, by offering up to the Almighty the tribute of our prayer, we acknowledge ourselves to be constant mendicants before the gate of his divine mercy.

The second relation by which we are united to God, is faith. In this life we do not see God face to face; yet we must not, on that account, believe in him less firmly. By prayer, we profess our faith in a God who knows, who is able and willing, to grant all that we ask of him.

The third relation is hope. We should hope that God will supply all our wants in this life, and grant us eternal happiness hereafter. What often troubles and disquiets so many souls is the uncertainty about their salvation; but, according to the apostle, our hope of salvation ought to be secure and immovable; and it will be so, undoubtedly, if it rests upon the solid foundations of prayer and the promise of God.

The power and mercy of God are, indeed, solid motives for hope, but the most solid is God's fidelity to his promises. God has promised, through the merits of Jesus Christ, to save us, and give us the graces necessary for our salvation. It is this promise which is the strongest of all motives of our hope of salvation; because, though we believe that God is infinite in power and mercy, nevertheless, as Juvenino well observes, we could not have the unwavering certainty that God would save us unless he himself had given us the certain promise to do so.

But this infallible promise of God will avail us nothing unless we pray. Prayer is, then, the second solid foundation of our hope. Now, as God has made us the infallible promise to give us all the graces we need, if we only pray for them; and as God has given the grace of prayer to every one, no one can reasonably fear to be lost, if he really perseveres in prayer. We can therefore truly say with St. Alphonsus: "I never feel more confident of my salvation than when I pray." This is evident. The oftener we converse with a true and virtuous friend, the better do we become acquainted with his good qualities; and the more we know his good qualities, the greater will be our confidence that he will keep the promises he has made us. Now, as prayer is a conversation with God, the oftener we pray, the better do we learn to know God; for, it is especially in prayer that God reveals himself to the soul. Now, the more we know God, the greater is our confidence that he will keep the promises which he has made us, through the merits of his divine Son. Thus prayer is truly the mother and nurse of hope.

The fourth relation is charity. By prayer we preserve and increase the divine virtue of charity. Prayer brings us nearer to God: it is like the magnetic fluid which passes over the telegraph wire from one operator to another. By means of this fluid they can communicate with each other at the very same moment; they are thus brought in close proximity to each other, though they may be in reality far apart. Now, prayer brings us nearer to God than the magnetic fluid does two telegraph operators. By means of prayer we make known to God all our desires and all our necessities, spiritual and temporal; and while we are praying, all the gifts and treasures of God's bounty descend upon our souls. Who can doubt that, by this close intercourse of the soul with God, the fire of divine love will be enkindled and increased in a most wonderful manner?

The fifth relation between God and the soul is that of a father to his child. Now, God, as Father, has an unspeakable desire to communicate his benefits to us: "My delights are to be with the children of men." (Prov. viii, 31.) It is in prayer that God makes known to us his ineffable sweetness, and communicates to us the gifts of his inexhaustible treasures. This infinite desire of God to bestow upon us the riches of his divinity will manifest itself superabundantly in heaven.

In this life we must merit eternal happiness by faithfully observing the law of God; but, at the same time, eternal happiness remains always a free gift of God: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?" Thus we are dependent on God for the grace of final perseverance. Now, by prayer we are enabled to correspond with the grace of God, and can thus merit eternal life.

O admirable wisdom of God, which has established for man's salvation and sanctification so easy and so infallible a means as that of prayer! What can be more important for man than the faithful practice of this most important good work of prayer? And yet, strange to say, there is nothing less understood and less attended to than this good work! The neglect and careless performance of prayer have ever been the fruitful source of all moral evils, and even of infidelity and idolatry. The more we neglect to pray to God, the true life of our soul, the more we shall experience the weakness of our will to resist vice and sin. Our passions, the temptations of the devil, and the allurements of the world, will draw us headlong from one abyss of wickedness to another.

By fasting, we understand every kind of exterior or bodily, and interior or spiritual, penance. By bodily penances we mortify the flesh, and deprive it of its pleasures and comforts. By spiritual penances we mortify our passions and irregular desires. It is a very salutary penance to endeavor always to preserve an edifying modesty and exterior recollection; always to speak with calmness and discretion, never to show in our looks any freedom which causes distractions, and satisfies our curiosity in every direction; not to indulge in any disorderly exterior habit arising from love of ease, but to be everywhere dignified in our exterior conduct out of respect to the presence of God.

To do all these things is to perform great penance,—penance which all the saints have practised. Another most useful penance is to be indifferent, as much as possible, to the quality or quantity of every kind of food, never saying anything against the manner in which it is prepared or placed before us. From this, however, no one should infer he should take such food as is injurious to his health. A constant and prudent temperance in eating and drinking is a more salutary penance than a rigorous fast which is often interrupted by excess in eating and drinking.

The constant practice of little penances should be highly valued. As a light but lasting rain is more beneficial to the earth than a heavy shower, so, small penances, daily practised, are better calculated to increase the spirit of penance than great austerities performed only at certain times.

Better than all these penances, is the mortification of our intellect, judgment, will, and self-love. "One ounce of this kind of penance is better," says St. Francis de Sales, "than a whole pound of the other." We mortify our intellect by rejecting all vain imaginations, all strange and useless thoughts which cause us to lose our time, expose us to many distractions, produce in us aversion to labor and all serious employments, and become the fertile source of thousands of temptations in the service of God.

We mortify our judgment by avoiding stubbornness in our opinions and assertions. We mortify our will by constantly acting in such a manner as we deem pleasing to God and to be in the order of Divine Providence, not considering whether it is pleasing or displeasing to us. What the devil hates, is not so much the mortification of the body, but he fears and truly hates the mortification of the will. No bodily penance can equal the mortification of the will. We should also mortify self-love which, in all things, seeks but itself, avoids all unpleasant things, follows its own inclinations, and tries to escape from everything that may cause repugnance. We should wage a continual war against our evil tendencies and bad temper, taking, as it were, our hearts into our hands, in order to repress the violence and impetuosity of our temperament. He who best controls his natural evil propensities, will abound most in divine grace. If we spare ourselves, God will not spare us; if we hate ourselves, God will not hate us; if we punish ourselves, God will not punish us; if we pardon nothing in ourselves, God will pardon all; if we are too indulgent to ourselves, God will be severe to us; if we are strict with ourselves, God will be merciful to us. Heavenly wisdom and prudence, a high degree of prayer, an heroic constancy in adversities, an admirable presence of mind in unforeseen events, and an astonishing facility in the practice of virtue, are the gifts and favors which the Lord is accustomed to bestow upon those who free themselves from all inordinate attachments and affections by the daily practice of exterior and interior penances. Those who neglect these penances will often transgress the commandments, and remain in great danger of eternal perdition.

By almsgiving is understood every corporal as well as spiritual work of mercy. (See Commandments, qq. 9–12.) Almighty God has made the rich depend on the poor, and the poor on the rich. The rich should take care of the poor, in order that the poor may take care of the rich. The misery of the poor is corporal, the misery of the rich is generally spiritual. The rich, then, should give corporal relief to the poor, in order to receive from them spiritual aid in return. Without the assistance of the rich the poor would die corporally. Without the prayers and blessings of the poor the rich would die spiritually. Graces and chastisements are in the hands of the poor. When they implore mercy for him who aids them, God grants their prayers. When they demand justice against those who send them away empty, God also grants their prayers. A rich man is in danger of losing his soul when he has not the prayers and blessings of the poor.

In this world, the rich are the judges of the poor. In the world to come, the poor will be the judges of the rich. Those who have not the poor for their advocates, will not find grace with their Judge. He who has the poor to plead for him need not fear, but may rejoice.

Who do you think it is that asks alms of you? It is Jesus, your King, your God, your Father. He it is who, in the guise of poverty, implores your assistance. How happy and honored are those who give alms to Jesus Christ! "Whatever," says St. John Chrysostom, "is given in charity, receives golden wings, and with them flies up to heaven, where it causes unspeakable joy to the angels. If you are given to works of mercy, you have a moral certainty of being predestined to life everlasting: "Put ye on," says St. Paul, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy." (Col. iii, 12.) As soon as you begin to practise the works of charity, you lay the corner-stone of your future sanctity and glory.

St. John the Almoner, Patriarch of Alexandria, was, as it were, an ocean of alms: the more he bestowed, the more he received. The saint tells us what induced him to practise this virtue especially. "When I was fifteen years old," he says, "and lived in Cyprus, I saw in a dream a virgin of charming beauty, with a splendid crown on her head. She drew near me, and struck me with her hand. I was frightened, and awoke from my sleep. When I asked her who she was, and whence she had come, and how she could dare come near me whilst asleep, she smiled, and casting upon me a most gracious look, she said in joyful accents: 'I am the first among the King's daughters. If you have me for your friend, you will also have the King for your most intimate friend. No one enjoys more his confidence, and stands in higher favor with him than I. It was I who persuaded him to leave heaven for earth, there to become man.' After having reflected on this vision for some time, I thought that it meant mercy and charity. I arose at once and went to the church. On my way I met a poor man who was almost naked, and shivering with cold. I took off my coat and gave it to him, saying to myself: Now let me see whether the vision I had is a true one. Before I reached the church, a certain man came and gave me one hundred dollars in gold, and then disappeared suddenly. Now I felt persuaded that the vision was no illusion, but a true vision from God." (Life by Leontius.)

From that time this saint devoted himself to works of charity, to such a degree, as to become the example and admiration of the whole world. "It is not right for us," he used to say, "to attend to the affairs of others sooner than to those of Jesus Christ. Go, then, about in the town, and take down the names of all my masters." And on being asked who they were whom he called his masters, he answered: "They are those whom you call the poor and the needy. Them I call my masters and my helpers; for they alone are able to assist me, that I may not be excluded from life everlasting. And no sooner have I given away something, than I receive it back a hundred-fold." This saint, admiring the great goodness of God who sent him so many good things, was often heard to exclaim, in the very great joy of his heart: "So! so! my Lord! let us see whether thou art more liberal in sending than I in bestowing!" Sophronius, seeing one day that this saint looked so much cast down, asked him the cause of his sadness. "I feel unhappy to-day," he answered, "because I have had no opportunity to assist the poor, thus to offer to God something in expiation of my sins."

The saints, then, rejoice in having an opportunity of practising charity, and they feel sad if such an opportunity is wanting. In order always to have such an opportunity, many of the saints fed a certain number of poor people every day; others sold everything they had, and even contracted heavy debts, to relieve the poor and needy.

St. Louis, King of France, used always to feed some poor people at his table, and he himself waited upon them: it was his firm belief that, in the person of the poor, he had Jesus Christ himself for his guest. He gave money to them with his own hands, because they are, said he, my soldiers to defend my kingdom; I myself, then, must pay their salary.

St. Charles Borromeo sold one of his estates for forty thousand dollars, to relieve the poor.

St. Serapion gave away even part of his clothing. Being asked why he did so, he pointed to the Gospel, and said:

"Behold what has robbed me of everything!" He gave in alms even the Gospel book itself.

St. Camillus de Lellis contracted a debt of thirty thousand dollars, for the relief of the poor.

Our Lord preserved the right arm of St. Oswald, King of England, uncorrupt, because he wished thus to honor him for having given with his right hand so much alms to the poor. (Butler's Lives of the Saints.)

We may then exclaim with St. John Chrysostom: "Truly, to be merciful and charitable toward the poor, is a greater grace than to possess the gift of removing mountains, of curing the sick, and of raising the dead to life."

But some one may say: "I have to provide for my children; and therefore I cannot be so liberal as I could wish." To those who make this objection, St. John Chrysostom answers: "If you will give up all to your children, you put your wealth into an unreliable bank; but if you place your wealth into the hands of God, he will become the guardian of your children, and preserve it all for them. If you wish the inheritance of your children to be well insured, make God their debtor by placing your wealth in his hands, and give them the following note: 'God will return a hundred-fold for what is given to him in the person of the poor. His promise faileth not. With him carry on usury.'" Another one might say: "I could wish, indeed, to make myself worthy of the rich temporal and spiritual blessings which the Lord is accustomed to bestow upon the charitable, but I am not well off myself; I lack the means of being liberal." Let him who makes this objection remember that a small gift is also very acceptable to God, provided it be made with love. "The poor, too," says St. Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. de S.

Baptismo), "can give valuable gifts to God; because God considers more the love of the giver than his gift itself." "Before God you will never appear with empty hands," says St. Gregory (Hom. 5 in Evang.), "if you appear with a heart replenished with a good will." On this account, Gerson used to say: "God seeks *adverbs* rather than *verbs;* that is, he pays more attention to the manner in which you do something in his honor, than to the action itself." Our Lord Jesus Christ was more pleased with the poor widow's mite than with the rich gifts of the wealthy. With Tobias, I say: "According to thy ability be merciful." Said he to his son: "If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even to bestow willingly a little," but with the generous will to give more if you were able. Thus the liberality of your heart will prevail upon the liberality of God to give you more; because the Lord will not suffer himself to be outdone in liberality. "If any one," said our Lord to St. Gertrude, "desires, for the love of me, to perform a good work, but, for want of means, cannot accomplish it, I will so esteem the purity of his intention as to consider it as if it had really been carried into effect; and even if he never commences what he wishes to undertake, he will not fail to obtain the same reward from me as if he had accomplished the work, and had never committed the least negligence in the matter."

O the great goodness of God, who receives the good will for the deed! Who can, then, have a lawful excuse if he be deprived of the abundant blessings which the Lord has in store for the charitable, both in this world and in the next? "Prayer, then, is good, with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures." (Tob. xii, 8.)

§ 21.—REWARD OF GOOD WORKS.

18. What reward will God give us for every good work?

An eternal reward in heaven; for Christ says: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, because your reward is very great in heaven." (Matt. v, 12.)

Every good work is from God, but not entirely from God, in the same manner as every good work is our own, but not entirely our own, because God works with us, and we with him; and it is to this coöperation of ours that it has pleased God to promise, gratuitously, the reward of eternal life. "Blessed is the man," says St. James, "that endureth temptation; for, when he has been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love him" (i, 12). On the day of judgment God will say to the elect: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Why? "For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry, and fed thee; thirsty, and gave thee drink? . . . And the King, answering, shall say to them: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. xxv, 34–40.) From these words of Holy Scripture it is clear that, in the next life, eternal glory is given as a reward for good works. To infants, however, who by baptism are the children of God, heavenly glory is given, solely by right of inheritance; but adults obtain it both as an inheritance, as they are the adopted children of God, and as a reward for their good works, because God has promised them this inheritance if they observe the law. This inheritance, then, is both a gift, and a reward due to them for their merits. Hence the apostle says: "You shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance." (Col. iii, 24.)

§ 22.—MERIT OF CONDIGNITY AND OF CONGRUITY.

19. When do our good works merit an eternal reward?
When we perform them in the state of grace, and with the intention to honor and please God.

Merit is that excellence or goodness of an action which entitles it to a reward; it is the relation between an action and its reward. When we do something sufficiently good to deserve a reward, our act is said to be worthy of reward, or to merit reward. Now, merit may be either divine or human. Only Jesus Christ could acquire divine or infinite merit. As every action of his proceeded from his divine and infinite person, there was due to it something equivalent; that is, an infinite reward as a matter of justice, called merit of condignity. But as to the merit of our actions, it is clear that in itself it is only of finite value, because it proceeds from finite creatures. Therefore we cannot claim for the merit or value of our actions an infinite reward as a just equivalent.

"In all transactions between equals," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "a compensation is only a principle of right. But if compensation comes from a superior, it is not a debt of absolute justice, but a certain form of justice, such as the recompense of a father to his child, or that of a government to a private individual. Now, there exists no equality between God and man; on the contrary, an infinite distance separates them." As Almighty God is our supreme Lord, he might require our service without any reward. He, therefore, is not bound by absolute justice to reward us for our service. The reward of God is but a relative justice, which is in proportion to our merit.

To acquire, then, merit with God which gives us a right to an eternal reward as a matter of justice (merit of congruity), it is necessary:—

1. That we should have received from God a promise, by which he gratuitously makes himself a debtor for the reward promised.

2. It is necessary that there should be a proper relation between merit and eternal glory. The beatific vision of God belongs to the supernatural order. To be able to merit it as a reward, it is necessary for us to be raised to the supernatural order, that is, to the state of sanctifying grace. In this state of grace our good works, proceeding, as they do, from the Divine Spirit himself, who lives in us and urges us on to the performance of good works, are all connected with grace. This connection with grace constitutes that proper relation between eternal glory and good works, and is that excellence or merit of them, which entitles us to an eternal reward. Hence St. Paul says: "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 17.)

3. The act itself must be good, and done voluntarily with the intention to honor and please God, as there is no proportion between heaven and actions performed from merely natural motives. Hence it is said: "Take heed that you do not your justice" (good works) "before men,

that you may be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father, who is in heaven." (Matt. vi, 1.)

We cannot, then, before we are justified, merit anything, nor can we at all merit the first degree of sanctifying grace; but, when sanctified, we can merit, by every good work, an eternal reward, an increase of sanctifying grace, and a degree of glory corresponding to it in heaven.

The merit, then, of every good work is from God, but not entirely from God; in the same manner as the merit of our good works is our own, but not entirely our own. Our merit is from God, inasmuch as all our merits depend on the assistance of grace, without which we cannot have any merits; and the reward of salvation, due to our good works, is founded in the promise gratuitously made to us by God through the merits of Jesus Christ. Hence eternal life is justly to be attributed to the mercy of God; for, in his mercy, he has promised it to our good works, and thus made himself a debtor of eternal life to all who, in the state of grace, perform good works. Our merit is also all our own, inasmuch as our good works proceed from our free-will. Thus our good works are not entirely from God, nor entirely our own, because God works with us, and we with him: "By the grace of God," says St. Paul, "I am what I am; and his grace in me hath not been void, but I have labored more abundantly than all they: yet not I, *but the grace of God with me.*" (1 Cor. xv, 10.) It is to this free coöperation of ours that God has been pleased to promise, gratuitously, the reward of eternal life, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Thus it is that eternal glory is called a reward: "Every man shall receive his *own reward* according to his own labor." (1 Cor. iii, 8.)

It is also called a debt: "Now, to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned according to grace, but" (mark the words!) "according to debt." (Rom. iv, 4.) Again, eternal glory is called a crown of justice: "As to the rest," says St. Paul, "there is laid up for me a crown of justice." (2 Tim. iv, 8.) Finally, it is called a payment: "And having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard." (Matt. xx, 2.) As Almighty God has promised to reward only the good works performed during our earthly career, it is evident that, with death, the time of merit ceases. Hence our dear Saviour says: "The night cometh when no man can work." (John ix, 4.) Therefore St. Paul exhorts us "to do good, whilst we have time." (Gal. vi, 6.)

§ 23.—THE GRACE OF PERSEVERANCE.

There was once an Eastern king, in his day the richest of men. A Grecian sage came to visit him, and, having seen all his glory and his majesty, was pressed by this poor child of vanity to say whether he was not the happiest of men. "Wait," said the wise man, "until you see the end." So it is as regards spiritual wealth. Almighty God, in spite of his ample promises, and his faithfulness to them, has not put out of his own hands the issues of life and death: the end comes from him as well as the beginning. When he has once given us grace, he has not, on that account, made over to us our own salvation. We can merit much; but, as we could not merit the grace of conversion, neither can we merit the grace of perseverance. From first to last we are dependent on him who made us.

There is a pious person. He has received many graces. He has lived in them so long. He has overcome many temptations. He has acquired many virtues. He possesses many supernatural gifts. He seems, from the very completeness of his sanctity, which encircles him on every side, to have, as it were, become impeccable. That he has started well, seems a reason why he will increase in virtue every day of his life. He seems fit to scale heaven by an inward power. Thus we may look at him and believe that a reverse or a fall is impossible. But the Holy Ghost tells us: "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Holy Scripture furnishes us with more than one instance by which this truth is confirmed. Who was so variously gifted, so inwardly endowed, so laden with external blessings, as Solomon? Yet Solomon, who was the wisest of men, was lifted up and fell so very low! He who wrote the Song of songs became a slave of vile affections. He fell in love with idolatrous women and followed their gods. The fall of Solomon shows that an exuberance of merits in a person is only a woe in the event if he lacks one gift,—the gift of perseverance.

There is one. He has been converted from a sinful life. He is very different from what he was. He feels the comfort of the change. He feels the peace and satisfaction of a cleansed conscience; but he is so taken up with that comfort and peace, that he rests in them and feels secure. He does not guard against temptation, or pray for support under it. He does not consider that, as he has changed from sin to fervor in religion, so he may go back from fervor to sin. He does not realize enough his continual dependence on God. Some great temptation, or some extraordinary vicissitude of life, comes upon him: he is surprised, he falls, and perhaps he never rises.

How many were good youths, yet are now careless men! They were blameless before the age of fifteen, yet now they are captives to habits of sin; they no longer go to church and to the sacraments! How many are there who, by mere change of place, have lost their holy religious fervor, and who first became careless, and then shameless!

The fall of so many must be a warning to every one of us. Indeed, the holier a person is, the greater reason has he to look carefully how he walks, lest he stumble and be lost. A deep conviction of this necessity has been to the saints their only preservative. Had they not feared to fall, they would never have persevered. Hence, like St. Paul, they are always conscious of their sin and their peril. To hear them speak about themselves, we should think them the most depraved of sinners and the most unstable of penitents. Every day St. Philip Neri used to make a protest to God, with the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, saying: "Lord, beware of me to-day lest I should betray thee, and do thee all the mischief in the world."

If a man knows that he has never deserved the good graces of his king, that the friendship which he enjoys is a pure gift, and that he is to possess it only as long as he continues to ask for it, would he not, in case he wished to enjoy it always, be obliged to entreat his benefactor to continue this favor? Now, this is precisely the case with the just in regard to the friendship, the grace, of God. The grace of God is a pure gift, which no one can obtain by his own unaided efforts; and, when it is obtained, no one can preserve it until death, unless God assist him in a particular manner. To possess the grace of God, is to possess God himself, the infinite good. Now, to persevere in the possession of this grace until death is so great a favor, that, according to the teachings of the fathers of the Church, no one can merit it, even were he to perform the good works of all the saints in heaven. God bestows this gift gratuitously; and he grants it, as St. Augustine teaches, to all those who daily pray for it. The saint says: "We must pray every day for the gift of perseverance, because even the just are every day in danger of losing it." If we daily pray for this gift, then, Almighty God will have an ever-watchful eye upon us; he will keep from us such temptations as he knows will be fatal to us; he will aid us at those times when we are in particular danger, whether from our negligence or other causes; he will direct the course of our life, so that we may be taken away "from the presence of evil," from the evil to come, when we are in a state of grace. "He was taken away," says the Wise Man, "lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. For the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind. Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time. For his soul pleased God: therefore he hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities. But the people see this and understand not, nor lay up such things in their hearts: that the grace of God and his mercy is with his saints, and that he hath respect to his chosen." (Wisd. iv, 10–15.)

Thus, in the work of our salvation, there is nothing on which we can pride ourselves, because, whatever power we have to merit heaven, we have solely through the merits of Christ; and, therefore, all the glory is his, as the fruit of the vine-branches is due to the vine which sent sap to the branches to enable them to produce the fruit. When we, then, obtain eternal life, we do not glory in our own works, but in the grace of God which was given us through the merits of Christ, that we might be able to merit an eternal glory. "God's goodness toward us," says St. Augustine, "is so great, that he wills the things which are his own gifts to be our merits, and, in crowning our merits, he crowns his own gifts."

§ 24.—GOOD INTENTION AND ITS MARKS.

20. How may we make a good intention?

We may make it in the following manner: "O my God! I do this for the love of thee;" or, "My Jesus! all for thy honor and glory!"

Intention is an act of our will by which we direct our mind to a certain end. If this end is good, our intention is also good. There are three kinds of good intention,—terrestrial, celestial, and divine. Our intention is terrestrial or temporal when we fast, pray, give alms, or do any other good work to obtain from God some temporal good, such as health, the gaining of a lawsuit, a prosperous journey, or the success of some other undertaking. This intention, however, is good and lawful, provided we sincerely say: Not my will, but thine be done, O Lord!

Our intention is celestial when we do a good work to obtain pardon of our sins, or to make satisfaction for them to the divine justice, or to acquire a virtue, or to overcome a temptation, or to enrich ourselves with heavenly goods, or to escape hell, or to gain eternal rewards in heaven. This intention is much better than the terrestrial one, because it tends to goods that are more excellent.

Our intention is divine if, by our actions, we seek only God's good pleasure, his honor and glory, the accomplishment of his will. This intention greatly surpasses in perfection and merit the two others. With this intention our dear Saviour performed all his actions: "I have come down from heaven," he says, "not to do my own will, but the will of my heavenly Father. My food is to do his will; and therefore, whosoever does everything with the intention to do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, my sister, and my mother."

An excellent means to render our good intentions still more pleasing to God is, to unite all our thoughts, words, and actions, to those of Jesus Christ. One day our Lord appeared to St. Gertrude. He was accompanied by St. John the Evangelist, who, in her presence, began to write in black, and then in red, letters. Our Lord revealed to the saint that the black letters represented the ordinary actions of the soul, whilst the red letters represented those actions which were done in union with his sufferings and death; and he added: "Unite to my sufferings all you do,—your fasts, your prayers, your penances, and all your actions. When you mortify your eyes, your ears, and your other senses, offer all these mortifications to me in union with the love whereby I have suffered so much in all my senses."

It is, moreover, a very meritorious practice to add another intention—that of gaining by our good works all the indulgences we can obtain in favor of the souls in purgatory. It is, then, a good intention to say:—

"My God, I offer thee whatever I may do or suffer this day, in union with the actions and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and with the intention of gaining all the indulgences

I can obtain in favor of the souls in purgatory;" or to say: "O my God! I do this for the love of thee;" or to say: "O my Jesus! all for thy honor and glory;" or to say: "Lord, I do this, because thou desirest to have it so, and hast commanded me to do it."

21. When should we make a good intention?

We should make it especially in the morning; and it is advisable to make it before and after each action.

The days of those who perform all their actions for God shall be full days, says holy David: "And full days shall be found in them." (Ps. lxxii, 10.) By full days he means days which are wholly employed in pleasing God. On the other hand, days which are not spent for God are empty days,—days without merit, without reward. Hence Holy Scripture says that "the wicked do not live half their days." (Ps. liv, 24.) As we belong entirely to God, we should consecrate to him all the actions of the day by making a good intention in the morning: "Whether you eat or drink," says St. Paul, "or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x, 31.) As the effect of our good intention is destroyed by vainglory or self-love, it is advisable often to repeat good intention, especially before and after each action. Our good intention gives our actions their value and excellence before God. If our intention is terrestrial, or celestial, or divine, our action becomes, like our intention, terrestrial, or celestial, or divine. If our intention is low and bad, our action is so also, no matter how brilliant it may appear in the eyes of men. A glass of water is but a very little thing; and yet, whoever gives it with a good intention to a poor man, shall not lose his reward, says Jesus Christ. On the other hand, a man who fasts, gives alms, converts sinners, without a good, or with a bad, intention, loses the merit of his actions. In the estimation of men, the value of an act increases in proportion to the time spent in its performance; but, before God, the value of an act increases in proportion to the purity of intention with which it is performed. For, as the Scripture says, men look only to the external acts, but God regards the heart; that is, the will with which they are performed: "For man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart." (1 Kings xvi, 7.) Can there be any action more excellent than to suffer martyrdom for the faith? But St. Paul says: "If I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity" (that is, do not die out of love for God), "it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii, 3.) It is neither torments nor death, say the fathers of the Church, but the cause and intention, that make a martyr.

Our intention is bad, if we seek only ourselves in our actions—if we perform them to be praised, or to please ourselves: "Take heed," says our Lord, "that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them." (Matt. vi.) If you do, I will answer you when asking a reward of me: "You have received your reward; you have obtained the praise which you sought: what can you now expect from me?" We read in the life of St. Pachomius that a certain monk made two mats whilst his companions made but one. He showed the two mats to the saint, in order to be praised; but the saint said to the other monks: "This monk has worked till night, and has offered his work to the devil."

There are marks by which we may easily know whether our works have truly been done for God. The first mark is, if we remain tranquil when our undertaking has not been successful. When we see that God has not been pleased to crown our efforts with success, we have no reason, on that account, to be disturbed; for we know that God does not demand an account of the success or failure of our undertaking, but of the purity of our intention.

The second mark is, to rejoice at the good done by others, as if it had been done by ourselves. If we seek nothing but the divine glory, we shall not care whether it is promoted by another or by ourselves. To rejoice in the good deeds done by others, is to enrich ourselves with their good deeds; for, were we to rejoice in the sins of our neighbors, we would thereby share in their sins, and become punishable in the sight of God. But God is more inclined to reward than to punish us. Now, if his justice obliges him to punish us for rejoicing in the sins of our neighbors, must not his goodness oblige him to reward us for rejoicing in the good deeds of our fellow-men?

The fourth mark is, not to desire approbation of our good works, nor gratitude for them, but to remain, even when censured and maltreated, in our usual tranquillity of mind, satisfied at having succeeded in pleasing God.

Should it ever happen that some of our actions are greatly praised by others, or that we are tempted to vainglory, and to take complacency in the praise bestowed upon us, we need not trouble ourselves about banishing the temptation. It is better to pay no attention to such a temptation, saying: "You come too late, for I have already given my work to God."

Neither should we omit good actions through fear of being seen and praised by others. The Lord wishes that our fellow-men should see our good works, in order that they may be induced to imitate them and give glory to him: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. v, 16.) As long as we do our actions with a good intention, we must not mind the temptation of vainglory; but, when assailed by it, let us say with St. Bernard: "I have not commenced this action for you, neither shall I omit it through fear of you." If we know that we have deserved hell by our sins, we shall regard the praises of men as insults and mockery.

Let us be persuaded that the Lord does not demand of us great things, but only that we present to him the little we do with a pure intention. If, on account of our poverty, we cannot give much alms to God, our will affords much to give to God by offering him what we do through the sole motive of pleasing him. "A person," says St. Magdalen de Pazzi, "who has performed all his actions with a pure intention, will go straight to heaven." To such a person our Lord will say on the day of his death: "Well done, good and faithful servant! Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, by performing your little works through the sole motive of pleasing me, I will place you over many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord." (Matt. xxv, 23.)

§ 25.—PREDESTINATION.—WHAT WILL SAVE AND WHAT WILL CONDEMN US.

A pious lady once wrote to St. Gregory the Great, who was her director, begging to let her know if her sins were forgiven, and if she might be at rest with regard to her salvation. The holy Pontiff answered: "You threaten me, madam, that you will not cease writing till God has revealed to me that your sins are forgiven, and that God has pronounced in heaven the irrevocable decree that you are predestined to persevere in God's grace to the end. Now, to save you from all useless trouble, I would wish to direct your attention to two truths, of which I am entirely certain. The first truth is, that I am too great a sinner to imagine myself of the number of those to whom God opens the pages of his divine counsels, or to whom he sends his angels or his prophets to make the secrets of his providence known.

"The second truth is, that such knowledge as you desire would do you more harm than good. Remember, my dear daughter in Christ, that security is the mother of negligence. If you were sure of heaven, you would be apt to grow lukewarm in the practices of piety and virtue. Distrust yourself, and place your confidence in God. Do what you can, and leave the rest to God." (Letter of St. Gregory.)

Some people, like this good lady, give themselves much trouble, by seeking to penetrate God's judgments and the great mystery of predestination. But our weak intellect can never penetrate the mysterious secrets of the Most High. We should, then, forbear to meddle with those secrets which God keeps to himself, since we have to learn so many things which he has revealed for our instruction.

First, God wishes us to know that he has predestined all men for salvation: "Who will have all men to be saved." (1 Tim. ii, 4.) "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance." (2 Pet. iii, 9.) However, the eternal enjoyment of God in heaven is naturally impossible for man. It is therefore necessary that Almighty God should lead them to this supernatural happiness of everlasting light and glory; that is, should provide them with the necessary means of obtaining their supernatural end. So, when God predestined men for salvation, he, at the same time, designed the means of attaining their salvation. This design of God to give us efficacious means to obtain our salvation is called *predestination.*

As the designs of God are eternal, he has, says St. Paul, predestined us before the commencement of the world: "And whom he predestined, them he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. viii, 30.) So, by predestination, says St. Thomas Aquinas, God conceived, from all eternity, the order by which we have to obtain eternal happiness.

Secondly, Almighty God wishes us to know that he has predestined all men for life everlasting on account of his well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, whom he has sent to be our Redeemer; that is, to gain, by his passion and death, all the graces necessary for the salvation of mankind. Hence it is said in Holy Scripture: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings . . . in Christ, as he chose us *in him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity; who *had predestinated us* unto the adoption of children *through Jesus Christ* unto himself, according to the purpose of his will." (Eph. i, 3–6.)

Thirdly, Almighty God wishes us to know that, in order to be saved, it is not enough that he should will our salvation, and that Christ died for the salvation of all (2 Cor. v, 15); he also wishes us to know that we, too, must wish to be saved, and obtain salvation in the manner in which he wishes us to be saved. Now, Almighty God has decreed that only those shall be saved who have done his will on earth: "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now, Almighty God manifests his will to man interiorly and exteriorly.

I. He manifests his will to man, interiorly, by his conscience. Almighty God has naturally given to every one an upright conscience, which is the testimony of right reason; a practical judgment which dictates what is allowed, and what is not. It is the voice of God which makes itself heard in us, and speaks to us in his name; it is a ray of eternal light which enlightens and directs us. As long as man walks by the light of that torch, he cannot stray from the paths of salvation, through which conscience, aided by grace, directs his steps.

Now, an upright conscience, as the delegate of God, performs four different functions in our regard: it enlightens us, it reproves us, it judges us, and it punishes us.

1. It enlightens us. Conscience is our first rule, our first director and faithful guide, whom we must follow. In the business of salvation there are straight and secure paths. But there are also crooked, winding, and deceitful ones, which may lead us astray. It belongs to an upright conscience to point out to us the secure paths of salvation, and to avoid the deceitful ones. It is the ray of heavenly light which shines upon us to direct our steps. It watches over our conduct; it attends to all our actions; it presides over all our thoughts, over all our affections: always clear in its penetration, always invariable in its decisions, always inflexible in its decrees. It knows not how to flatter, nor to dissemble, nor to soften, nor to relent, nor to yield to times and circumstances. It never admits any gratifications and

condescensions that favor nature; it always speaks the same sincere language conformably to the spirit of the law.

2. Conscience reproves us. No; conscience can never be an accomplice in our disorders; it disavows, it condemns them. From the moment in which we run astray, or even are on the point of erring, conscience stands at the door of our heart, and says to us, on the part of God himself, "It is not lawful for thee." (Matt. xiv, 4.) No, it is not allowed thee to do that action, to keep that connection, to speak that word, to rest on that thought and desire. Read not that book which is of dangerous tendency; keep not the company of that person whose character is suspected; expose not thyself on that occasion which will prove fatal to thee; that gain is unlawful.

If, in spite of these remonstrances of conscience, we still proceed, it instantaneously rises up against us and cries out, "What hast thou done?" (2 Kings iii, 24.) Thou hast sinned; thou hast offended thy God; thou hast transgressed his law, incurred his disgrace; the object of his indignation, thou hast exposed thyself to the rigors of his justice and severest vengeance. Thus guilty David hears a voice which reproaches him with his crime, and represents it continually to his eyes: "My sin is always before me." (Ps. lxxx, 5.) Thus the murderer Cain feels all the horrors of his heinous attempt: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." (Gen. iv, 13.) Thus the perfidious Judas is stunned with the voice of the blood which he had betrayed: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (Matt. xxvii, 4.) Thus every sinner is accountable for his conduct to his conscience. "Stop," it says to him, "thou art upon the brink of a precipice. The law forbids it thee under pain of death. Thou wilt answer for it to God."

No, there never would be a sin, if there never were a resistance to the inward voice of conscience.

3. Conscience judges us. The instant the sin is committed against God, the decree of conscience is passed against us: "Thou hast sinned; thou hast deserved hell. If thou die in this condition, thou art damned. The moment of thy death will begin to put the sentence into execution." It is, however, God himself, the sovereign Judge, who at this time makes his voice heard, and passes the sentence. Conscience is but the instrument and organ of the divine sentence. It pronounces sentence in God's name, and condemns under his sovereign authority. In this sense it is said that we ourselves are our first judges, and that the first tribunal to which we are cited is our own conscience, without our being able to escape from its presence, or call in question its justice, or elude its decree. Yes, the judgment is just, it is dreadful, it is without appeal. Penance alone can stop its course and effect, and the more so, because conscience, in pronouncing the sentence, becomes at the same time witness against us, and its deposition is so much more to be dreaded, as it is intimate, clear, and personal to us. Ah! how unfortunate is it to be condemned by ourselves, and to have nothing to oppose to the condemnation! And what in effect can be opposed when our own conscience is the accuser, witness, and judge?

4. Therefore, it only remains for conscience to assume the character of executioner, and to exercise its vengeance upon us. Dreadful charge, and still more terrible than all the rest! It punishes us. Almighty God intrusts the interests of his justice and revenge to the hands of conscience. And in how many different ways does it discharge this dreadful office against the sinner after his

sin! By those racking remorses which tear him in pieces; by the gnawing worm which eats him up; by the continued consciousness of his guilt, which follows him everywhere; by the fears, terrors, and continued alarms, in which he lives. If he is visited by illness, if the smallest infirmity attacks him, death instantly presents itself to his eyes. If the thunder roars, if the earth quakes, if any unexpected accident happens, he believes that the hand of God is lifted against him, and fears that he will be swallowed up every instant. Alas! has the sinner need of any more dreadful torture, any more cruel executioner, any more severe minister of vengeance, than his own conscience, which racks and torments him? Was anything else wanting to torture David than the bloody spectre of Urias, which presented itself continually before him? Was anything further necessary to affright the impious Baltassar than the sight of that hand which came forth from the wall and wrote his sentence upon it? Did Antiochus stand in need of more than the melancholy representation of the temple of Jerusalem which had been profaned by him? And why this, but because conscience, whose rights they had violated, sought atonement, by setting the remembrance of their crimes continually before them, and making the representation of them serve as an instrument of their chastisement and of its own revenge?

Thus the dreadful threat which God makes to the sinner is literally accomplished: "Thou shalt fear night and day," says the Lord, "neither shalt thou trust thy life. In the morning thou shalt say in thy fright: Who will grant me evening? and at evening: Who will grant me morning?" (Deut. xxviii, 66, 67.) The sound of this dreadful voice of conscience is heard in the palaces of the great ones, on the thrones of kings, at the head of armies, in the bustle of cities, in the retirement of the country: everywhere it makes the torment of every sinner. It is, however, a wholesome torment. One of the greatest blessings a sinner can have, is to be rent with remorse; for such a remorse is a grace, because it has an essential connection with the salvation of the soul. The stings of conscience are the first of graces, because the sinner's conversion must begin with them, if it ever does begin. These stings are the most necessary of all graces, since, without them, there never can be a conversion. They are the most true grace, since they cannot be subject to illusion, and only tend to draw the soul back to the right path. They are the most precious grace, since every wholesome remorse is merited by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. They are sometimes even the only grace, since the sinner has sometimes no other grace given him than remorse and prayer, having shut the entrance of his heart to every other grace.

II. Almighty God has manifested his will, exteriorly, by speaking to mankind through the patriarchs and prophets, and at last through Jesus Christ, his well-beloved Son, who is our Lord and Redeemer. Jesus Christ appointed his apostles and their lawful successors to teach all nations whatever he had taught for the salvation of mankind. He called the apostles and their lawful successors, and those who would believe in their word, his Church. Of the apostles and their lawful successors, he said: "He who heareth you, heareth me; and he who despiseth you, despiseth me." And of him who will not hear the Church, he said: "Let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." (Matt. xviii, 17.)

The will of God, therefore, is taught and learned only in the Church of Jesus Christ. To believe what the Church teaches is to believe Jesus Christ, our Lord and God himself, who, through her, speaks to us. Now, to believe God when he speaks to us, either in person, or through those whom he has appointed to teach us in his name and by his authority, is to have faith in God and in his word. This faith is called divine faith, and consequently is infallible, because what God speaks or reveals is infallibly true, as it is impossible that from God, the fountain of all wisdom and holiness, the slightest error could proceed. Hence only those have divine faith who believe in the doctrine of the Church of Christ. Now, the Church of Christ is no other than the Roman Catholic Church, because in her alone is found the successor of St. Peter, the head and infallible teacher of Christ's Church, in whom Christ invested his power and authority, when he said: "I say to thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi, 18.) "To thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." (Ibid. xvi, 19.) "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." (John xxi, 15.) And not only the successor of St. Peter, the pope, is found in the Roman Catholic Church alone, but also the successors of the other apostles, viz., the bishops of the Catholic Church, are found only there. Hence, as only those who believe in the doctrine of Christ's Church have divine faith, and as the Roman Catholic Church alone is Christ's Church, it is clear that only those who believe in the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church have divine faith.

Now, it should be remembered that this divine faith is the commencement of our salvation, the foundation and source of our sanctification or justification: "Without this faith," says St. Paul, "no one can please God" (Heb. xi, 6); that is, without this faith no justification is possible, and without justification no salvation is possible. Now, as without divine faith no salvation is possible, and as divine faith is found in the Roman Catholic Church alone, therefore salvation is possible only in the Roman Catholic Church: which is as much as to say: *Out of the Roman Catholic Church there is no salvation.*

Such is the importance, such the magnitude, such the vital spiritual interest of this truth, that the holy Catholic Church has placed it as the first article of the profession of faith which is to be made by converts when they are about to be received into the Church. This truth, or article of faith, reads as follows: "I, N. N., having before my eyes the Holy Gospels, which I touch with my hand, and *knowing that no one can be saved without that faith which the Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church holds, believes, and teaches*, against which I grieve that I have greatly erred, inasmuch as I have held and believed doctrines opposed to her teaching."

From these words, which the holy Church puts in the mouth of the convert, it is clear that, should any one believe all the articles of faith of the Catholic Church without believing the truth, that out of the Roman Catholic Church there is no salvation, he could not be received into the Church, for the simple reason that his faith in the truths of our religion would be human only, not divine, because it is not based upon the divine authority of Jesus Christ invested in his one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. To believe a doctrine to be divine, it is necessary to believe that its teacher is divine and infallible. He, therefore, who does not believe that the teacher is divine, does not believe that his teaching is divine; consequently, he has no divine faith, and cannot, on this account, be received into the Church. But let one, who is as yet out of the Church, believe that the Roman Catholic Church is appointed by God to teach mankind all the truths of salvation, though he does not know each truth in particular, he still can be received into the Church, because he has implicit divine faith in all the truths the Church teaches, on account of his faith in her as the divine teacher of these truths.

The first article of faith, then, or the fundamental truth upon which all other Catholic truths are based, is, that the Roman Catholic Church alone is appointed by God to teach mankind in his name, and by his infallible authority, all that we must believe and do in order to be saved. The stronger and livelier our faith is in this truth, the stronger and livelier also will be our faith in all that the Church teaches. He, therefore, who renounces the divine Teacher, renounces all divine teaching. "If he admits," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "some supernatural truths, they are but simple opinions, as he makes them (the truths) depend on his private judgment. It is absurd for him to say that he believes in Jesus Christ. To believe in a man is to give our full assent to his word, and to all he teaches. True faith, therefore, is absolute belief in Jesus Christ and in all his doctrine. Hence, if one does not adhere to all that Jesus Christ has prescribed for our salvation, he has no more the doctrine of Jesus Christ and of his Church than the Pagans, Jews, and Turks have." "He is," says Jesus Christ, "but a heathen and a publican."

Fourthly, Almighty God wishes us to remember that he has endowed us with the precious gift of liberty. We can choose to do his will, as manifested by our conscience and by the doctrine of his Church, or we can choose to oppose it. But to be always mindful of God's will; always to honor, appreciate, and love it above all things; always to embrace and follow it punctually and promptly; always to understand clearly that whatever is contrary to God's will can never be good or meritorious, but must bring death to the soul; to return to his divine will after having strayed away from it,—all this is not the work of our weak nature, but is entirely the effect of divine grace; for, if faith teaches us that God made all things very good, it also teaches us that they cannot remain so without God's assistance: otherwise, they would cease to be dependent on him. This is true of all God's creatures, but especially of man, who, being endowed with free-will, has it in his power to obey or transgress the law of God.

Fifthly, Almighty God, therefore, wishes us to know that, without his grace, we are not able to do his will; and that he has promised to give his grace to all who ask for it: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." (Matt. vii, 7.) "Every one that asketh receiveth." (Luke ii, 10.) It will, therefore, not avail sinners, in the day of judgment, to excuse themselves by saying that they could not resist temptation, for St. Paul teaches that God is faithful, and will suffer no one to be tempted beyond what he is able. (1 Cor. x, 13.) If we need more strength to resist, we have but to ask the Almighty, and he will give it to us; and with his assistance we can overcome all the temptations of Satan, of the flesh, and of the world. St. Paul shows that he is most bountiful to those who invoke him: "Rich unto all that call upon him: for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. x, 12, 13.)

To sum up. God has predestined all men for salvation: but, at the same time, he has decreed that only those shall be saved who do his will, as manifested by their conscience and by the doctrine of the Church. In order to enable men to do his will, he gives to all the grace of prayer, with the promise to give them the efficacious graces necessary for salvation, if they ask for them with confidence and perseverance. Now, if it is asked, "What will save, and what will condemn us?" the answer is: "If we do God's will, we shall be saved; and if we oppose God's will to the end of our life, we shall be condemned to hell."

Now, should any one ask, "If it is an article of faith that God wishes all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all, how is it that all men are not saved?" the answer is: "Because all do not do what God has commanded, and the Lord does not wish to force any one's will. All, therefore, who are lost, are lost through their own neglect; for our Lord gives to all the grace necessary for salvation. If the sinner, however, has not sufficient grace to do what God commands, it is through his own fault. This fault is carelessness in availing himself of the grace of prayer, by which he obtains the strength necessary to enable him to observe the commandments. He, therefore, who does not make use of the grace of prayer as the means of salvation, is lost through his own fault.

But, now, one may say: "It is an infallible truth that only those enter the kingdom of heaven who have done God's will on earth. Again, it is an infallible truth that God's will has been made known only to the Catholic Church, and therefore it is an article of faith that out of the Catholic Church there is no salvation. How, then, can it be said that God wishes all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, since so many millions of heathens and heretics are out of the pale of the Church without any fault of theirs, and who never have an opportunity of knowing better ? What are we to think of their salvation ?"

To this question we give the following answer: "Their inculpable (invincible) ignorance will not save them; but if they fear God and live up to their conscience, God, in his infinite mercy, will furnish them with the necessary means of salvation, even so as to send, if needed, an angel to instruct them in the Catholic faith, rather than let them perish through inculpable ignorance."

Inculpable, or invincible, ignorance has never been and will never be a means of salvation. To be saved, it is necessary to be justified, or to be in the state of sanctifying grace. In order to obtain sanctifying grace, it is necessary to have the proper dispositions for justification; that is, true faith in the divine Redeemer, confident hope in his merits, sincere sorrow for sin, together with the firm purpose of doing all that God has commanded, etc. Now, these supernatural acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, etc., which prepare the soul for receiving sanctifying grace, can never be supplied by invincible ignorance; and if invincible ignorance cannot supply the preparation for receiving sanctifying grace, much less can it bestow sanctifying grace itself. "Invincible ignorance," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "is a punishment for sin." It is, then, a curse, but not a blessing or a means of salvation.

But if we say that inculpable ignorance cannot save a man, we thereby do not say that invincible ignorance damns a man. Far from it. To say, invincible ignorance is no means of salvation, is one thing; and to say, invincible ignorance is the cause of damnation, is another. To maintain the latter, would be wrong; for inculpable ignorance of the fundamental principles of faith excuses a heathen from the sin of infidelity, and a Protestant from the sin of heresy: because, as such invincible ignorance is only a simple involuntary privation, it is no sin before God. Hence, if souls, invincibly ignorant of the means of salvation, are damned, they are not damned on account of their infidelity or heresy, but on account of other sins, says St. Thomas Aquinas: "For whosoever have sinned without the law," says St. Paul, "shall perish without the law." (Rom. ii, 12.)

It is a divinely revealed truth that God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. ii, 4), and that "Jesus Christ gave himself a redemption for all." (1 Tim. ii, 6.) From these passages St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Prosper, St. Alphonsus, and others, conclude that God never fails to give to all men sufficient assistance to work out their salvation if they desire to do so.

Indeed, never from the beginning of the world has God, who is most merciful and kind, been wanting to those who called upon him. He manifested himself to them, and pointed out in a manner suited to the times and circumstances, a sure and direct path to the happiness of heaven; he tried, in many ways, to make the pagans return to him, and do penance for their sins. He sent the terrible disaster of the universal deluge; he sent fire upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha; he chastised Egypt, Canaan, and many other places, in a most frightful manner. He made prophets and other holy men live among them, as Daniel, Jonas, Job, to teach them by word and example how to worship the true God and be saved: "He scattered the Israelites among the Gentiles, in order that they might declare to them his wonderful works, and that there is no other Almighty God besides him." (Tob. xiii, 4.) He instructed King Nabuchodonosor by dreams; Baltassar, by a mysterious handwriting on the wall. Those who heeded his voice, and truly repented, were saved; for St. Peter tell us that, at the time of the universal deluge, many were saved, because they entered into themselves, and truly repented of their sins. Hence, St. Thomas (Qu. 14, de Vert., art. 11, ad 1) says that, "if any one was brought up in the wilderness or among brute beasts, and if he followed the law of natural reason to desire what is good, and to avoid what is wicked, we should certainly believe either that God, by an inward inspiration, would reveal to him what he should believe, or would send some one to preach the faith to him, as he sent Peter to Cornelius. Thus, then, according to the Angelic Doctor, God, at least remotely, gives to the infidels, who have the use of reason, sufficient grace to obtain salvation; and this grace consists in a certain instruction of the mind, and in a movement of the will to observe the natural law. And if the infidel coöperates with this movement, observing the precepts of the law of nature, and abstaining from grievous sins, he will certainly receive, through the merits of Jesus Christ, sufficient grace to embrace the faith and save his soul.

No doubt, among those who are culpably ignorant of the means of salvation, may be found such as fear God and live up to their conscience. They, therefore, do the will of God, as much as it is known to them. But to do the will of God thus far only, is by no means sufficient to justify them, or to put them in the state of sanctifying grace;

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and, without being in the state of sanctifying grace, they cannot be saved. To obtain this grace, they must have the dispositions for it; that is, true faith in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, confident hope in his merits, a determined will to avoid sin, etc., as may be seen above, when we speak of justification. So, to prepare them for receiving sanctifying grace, Almighty God, who is just, and therefore condemns no one without his fault, puts them in the way of salvation, either by natural or supernatural means.

There is a Protestant. He lived in a part of Germany, where he always remained invincibly ignorant of the true religion, but lived up to the dictates of his conscience. At last he resolved to emigrate to this country, with a view of benefiting himself temporally. But Almighty God had other designs in regard to him. He wished to put him in the way of salvation. This Protestant goes into a Protestant church in this country. He sees at once a vast difference between the Protestants in America and those in Europe. He is perplexed at this difference, and begins to doubt about the truth of Protestantism. To make sure whether he is right or wrong in his religion, he communicates his doubts to a well-instructed Catholic friend, who explains to him what true religion is, and where it is found. Accordingly, as he is upright before God, and wishes to save his soul, he makes up his mind to become a Catholic. Thus the emigration of this Protestant to this country was, in the hands of God, the natural means of putting him in the way of salvation.

Not long ago, a friend of mine told me that a lady who was on board a steamer dropped a Catholic book into the water. The captain of the boat saved the book, and read it before returning it, and at last became a Catholic.

Humanly speaking, the falling of the book into the water was quite accidental; but Almighty God made use of this circumstance to put in the way of salvation one who had been invincibly ignorant, and who had not acted against his conscience.

There is a young lady. Her parents profess no religion. They never go to church. They never speak of religion at home, but take care that their daughter may not become acquainted with wicked companions. So she remains naturally good and innocent. To give her a good education, they place her in a Catholic institution. There she becomes acquainted with Catholic companions, with Catholic devotions, ceremonies, with the service of the Church, etc. She is inquisitive, and wishes to know the meaning of everything that she sees and hears about Catholicity. She is pleased with the Catholic Church, and exclaims: "I never heard anything of the kind before." At last she becomes a Catholic. Here, education is the means which God uses to place on the road to heaven one who had been invincibly ignorant of the means of salvation, and had remained naturally good and innocent.

Many similar instances could be quoted to show that Almighty God, in his goodness, uses natural ways and means to place invincibly ignorant souls, that live up to their conscience, in the way of salvation. This is the ordinary way of his divine Providence, viz., to lead men, by natural ways and means, to what is supernatural.

But there may be exceptional cases, in which Almighty God uses supernatural means to save a man inculpably ignorant and living up to his conscience. Suppose such a one is living in a country in which, naturally speaking, during his lifetime he can hear nothing of the Catholic religion. In this case, or, as has been expressed above, "*if needed*," Almighty God will, in his infinite mercy, make use of a supernatural means to lead that person to salvation, rather than let him perish through inculpable ignorance. He can supernaturally enlighten him, so that he may know what he must believe in order to be saved. Indeed, Almighty God, in his infinite mercy, can dispose a soul, in a moment, for receiving sanctifying grace, and infuse, at the same time, this grace into his soul. The light of true faith, the voluntary inclination of free-will to conform to the will and grace of God, the determination of free-will to abstain from sin, the remission of sins, and the infusion of grace, take place by a simultaneous movement; for justification is instantaneous, and has no successive gradation. It is acquired by grace and by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who takes possession of the soul at once: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind, and it filled the whole house." (Acts ii, 2.) Resistance and mental deliberation may be long and slow on the part of the sinner, but victory and triumph are quick and sudden on the part of God, by the infusion of his grace into a repentant soul.

There are, indeed, remarkable instances of sudden conversions of souls in times past and present, which prove that such powerful effects can be and are operated by the grace of God. Such a marvellous prodigy, such a sudden spiritual renovation of the soul of a man, is a most extraordinary grace, which Almighty God can grant, even to a great sinner in his last hour. "As God is good," says St. Augustine, "he may save a person without any merits on his part."

Of those who die in this way, we say that, though such persons are not externally united to the body of the Church, they are in the way of salvation, because they leave this world, united, at least, to the soul of the Church. As we cannot know, without a special revelation, what passes between God and the soul in her last moments, and consequently do not know whether or not a person dying out of the Church has received the extraordinary grace of conversion, but, in charity, may hope he has, we are allowed to pray, even to have the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered up for him privately.

Almighty God can also, by a miracle, carry a priest to a person invincibly ignorant and living up to the dictates of his conscience; or he can carry such a person to a priest-or make use of an angel or a saint to lead him to the way of salvation.

Among the holy souls of past centuries who have been loaded with signal favors and privileges by Almighty God, we must place, in the first rank, Mary of Jesus, often styled of Agreda, from the name of the place in Spain where she passed her life. The celebrated J. Goerres, in his grand work, "Mysticism," does not hesitate to cite as an example the life of Mary of Agreda, in a chapter entitled, "The Culminating Point of Christian Mysticism." Indeed, there could not be found a more perfect model of the highest mystic ways.

This holy virgin burned with a most ardent love for God and for the salvation of souls. One day, she beheld in a vision all the nations of the world. She saw how the greater part of men were deprived of God's grace, and running headlong to everlasting perdition. She saw how the Indians of Mexico put fewer obstacles to the grace of conversion than any other nation who were out of the Catholic Church, and how God, on this account, was ready to show mercy to them. Hence, she redoubled her prayers and penances to obtain for them the grace of conversion. God heard her prayers. He commanded her to teach the Catholic religion to those Mexican Indians. From that time, she appeared, by way of bilocation, to the savages, not less than five hundred times, instructing them in all the truths of our holy religion, and performing miracles in confirmation of these truths. When all were converted to the faith, she told them that religious priests would be sent by God to receive them into the Church by baptism. As she had told, so it happened. God, in his mercy, sent to these good Indians several Franciscan fathers, who were greatly astonished when they found those savages fully instructed in the Catholic doctrine. When they asked the Indians who had instructed them, they were told that a holy virgin had appeared among them many times, and taught them the Catholic religion and confirmed it by miracles. (Life of the Venerable Mary of Jesus of Agreda, § xii.) Thus those good Indians were brought miraculously to the knowledge of the true religion in the Catholic Church, because they followed their conscience in observing the natural law.

Something similar is related in the life of Father J. Anchieta, S. J. (chap. vi). One day, this great man of God entered the woods of Itannia, in Brazil, without any assignable motive, and, in fact, as if he were guided by another. At a little distance he perceived an old man seated on the ground and leaning against a tree. "Hasten your steps," cried the old man when he saw the father, "for I have been expecting you for some time." The saintly missionary asked him who he was, and from what country he had come. "My country," said the old man, "is beyond the sea." He added other things which led the father to infer that he had come from a distant province, near Rio de la Plata, and that he had either been conveyed by supernatural means from his own country to the place where he then was, or that, by the direction and guidance of heaven, he had been led thither with great labor and fatigue, and had placed himself where the father found him, in full expectation of the accomplishment of the divine promise. Father Anchieta then asked him why he had come to that place. "I have come hither," he answered, "in order that I might be taught the right path." This is the expression which the Brazilians use when they speak of the laws of God and of the way to heaven. Father Anchieta felt convinced, from the answers of the old man, that he had never had more than one wife, had never taken up arms except in his own just defence, and that he had never grievously transgressed the law of nature. He perceived, moreover, from the arguments of the old man, that he knew many truths relative to the Author of nature, to the soul, and to virtue and vice. When Father Anchieta had explained to him several of the mysteries of our holy religion, he said: "It is thus that I have hitherto understood them, but I knew not how to define them." After having sufficiently instructed the old man, Father Anchieta collected some rain-water from the leaves of the wild thistles, baptized him, and named him Adam. The new disciple of Christ immediately experienced in his soul the holy effects of baptism. He raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and thanked Almighty God for the mercy which he had bestowed upon him. Soon after, he expired in the arms of Father Anchieta, who buried him according to the ceremonies of the Church.

What has just been said about the salvation of the heathens, applies, also, to the salvation of the Jews and heretics. There is a Protestant. His conscience is formed upon false religious principles, and is, on this account, erroneous. Now, it may be that the error is inculpable. It is inculpable, if it is not wilful; and it is not wilful as long as he has no motive to doubt, and no means of being instructed. To illustrate :—An heir enters upon an estate which was formerly unjustly acquired by his ancestors; but, at the time when he accepted it, he had no knowledge, no doubt, about the estate being unjustly acquired. He believes that he is the lawful possessor of it. In this he is in error, but the error is involuntary, and not culpable. In like manner, one may be a Protestant because his parents brought him up in Protestantism. He may continue to live for years as a Protestant, never entertaining any doubt as to the erroneous principles of Protestantism, and, consequently, as to his salvation in it. His error, therefore, concerning religion is not culpable, and on this account he is said to be in good faith. Now, if he lives up to the dictates of his conscience, he will be saved, though not as a Protestant, but as a Catholic; for, Almighty God will bring him to the knowledge of the truth of the Catholic religion, and, if he follows this knowledge of the truth, he will be saved as a Catholic. Every sincere convert to the Church can bear witness to this great truth.

Lord Stafford was a good Catholic, but his wife a strict Protestant. He had been living several years in Abbeville, France. He begged the Bishop of Amiens, Monseigneur de la Motte, to convert his wife. "God alone can convert the soul," answered the bishop. "You can do more good by praying for her, than I can by talking to her." Now, Lady Stafford had a great esteem for St. Francis de Sales. "If I could meet a bishop like him," she said, "I might become a Catholic." She had an interview with the Bishop of Amiens. At first, he avoided the subject of religion, and sought to gain her confidence. One day he asked her if her conscience was entirely at rest, if she had no doubts about her religion, living thus separated from the Church. "With the Bible in my hand," she answered, "I fear no one. I am quite satisfied." The words of the bishop, however, made a deep impression on her. She began to doubt seriously of the truth of her sect. She consulted the bishop. She heard one of his sermons, and conceived a great desire to be able to profess the same religious belief as this saintly prelate. She had yet some doubts about holy Mass and purgatory. She consulted the bishop once more. Instead of settling her doubts immediately, the bishop said: "Madame, you are acquainted with the Protestant Bishop of London. You have evidently great confidence in him. Go, then, and lay before him what I now tell you: The Bishop of Amiens declares that he will become a Protestant, if you can disprove the fact that St. Augustine, whom you regard as one of the greatest lights of the Church, offered up the holy Mass, and offered it up for the dead, viz., for his own deceased mother." The proposition was accepted. Lady Stafford begged her husband to go to London, and there, *incognito*, place the written message in the hands of the Protestant bishop, and bring back his written answer. The Protestant bishop read the message, and, on being requested to write an answer, he said: "This lady has fallen into bad hands: she will be perverted. Whatever I might say will not hinder the evil. A letter from me would only give rise to misunderstandings and unpleasant recriminations." As we may imagine, Lady Stafford was greatly surprised at this answer. She was sincere. It was evident that the bishop did not wish to answer, because he could not.

These two thoughts especially moved her to take the final step: "1. No Catholic *ever* became a Protestant in order to do penance for his sins, and to return to God, while many Protestants have become Catholics for this very reason."

"2. The Protestants honor as saints many doctors and fathers of the Church, who taught a doctrine just the reverse of Protestantism; and, consequently, Protestants must admit that one can become a saint by imitating these holy doctors, and by living and dying in their belief. Lady Stafford made the spiritual exercises for a few days in a convent, and finally became a good, fervent Catholic." (Herbert.)

There is another Protestant. He entertains doubts as to his salvation in Protestantism, because he has good reasons to doubt the truth of Protestant principles. Now, such a one is obliged in conscience to seek for light and instruction, if he can. If he cannot do so immediately, he must firmly purpose to procure information, as soon as he can, from those who can give it in a satisfactory manner, and must be determined to renounce his error if he finds out that he is living in a false religion. Meanwhile, he must beg of God to enlighten him, and enable him to do what seems best to him in the present circumstances. Should he neglect seeking instruction when he can, and ought to do so, his error is wilful and culpable before God. His conscience is culpably erroneous, and, if he continues thus to live in a known and voluntary error, his conscience becomes what is called a false, blinded, and misled conscience, and consequently is criminal in the eyes of God. This is the most lamentable, most unhappy, state into which a soul can fall; as this kind of conscience drives the sinner headlong into all sorts of crimes, and becomes to him a source of blindness of the understanding, of hardness of heart, and, finally, of eternal reprobation if he perseveres in this state.

Now, it is a well-known fact that there are thousands of our separated brethren whose conscience is thus sinfully erroneous. We read in the Old Testament that Almighty God scattered the Jews among the heathens, and performed great miracles in favor of his chosen people. He thus wished the Gentiles to come to the knowledge of the true God and of the true religion. In like manner, Almighty God has scattered the Catholics, the children of his Church, among our modern heathens and Protestants. He has never failed to perform miracles in the Catholic Church. Who has not heard of the many great miracles performed in France, and elsewhere, by the use of the miraculous water of Lourdes? Who has not witnessed the wonderful protection of the Catholic Church? Who has not read the truths of the Catholic Church, even in Protestant newspapers? The Lord, who wishes that all should come to the knowledge of the true religion, makes use of these and other means to cause doubts to arise in the souls of those who are separated from his Church.

Such doubts as to their salvation in Protestantism are, for our separated brethren, a great grace, as Almighty God, by these doubts, begins to lead them to the way of salvation, by obliging them to seek in all sincerity for light and instruction. But, as the greater part of non-

Catholics do not heed these doubts, their consciences remain culpably erroneous in a matter of the greatest importance; for, to die in this state is to die in the state of reprobation: it is to be lost forever through one's own fault.

If you travel at night through a wild desolate moorland, you will notice in some lonely spot a flame of fire that flickers and shoots, and recedes farther and farther as you follow it. It is called the will-o'-the-wisp, or the wandering light. This light is not from heaven, but from the deep, miry marsh. Woe to the foolish traveller who blindly follows it! It leads him on into a deep morass, into some black pool, where he perishes alone in the darkness! His last agonizing shriek, his trembling groan, is echoed by the hooting nightbird.

There are wandering lights, too, in the human mind, that lead many astray. Men may think that these lights come from above, from the Holy Spirit, but they proceed only from self-conceit, from passion, from pride, and often from the demon of hell. Protestants, who think they understand the Bible, and "twist it," as St. Peter says, "to their own destruction;" who follow what they are pleased to call the "inner lights and inspirations," contrary to what is taught by the Church of Jesus Christ, follow wandering lights that lead into the abyss of hell. An inspiration must be conformable to the teachings of the holy Church. God cannot contradict himself. That the Holy Ghost always guides the Church, is certain: Jesus Christ has said so: The Holy Ghost will teach you all truth, and "abide with you *forever*;" but that he teaches the *individual* soul, is not certain. The devil can quote texts, and explain them, too, in his own way; he tried his exegetical talent even on our Lord himself.

If we go through the woods in winter, and see a tree brown and bare, stretching out its gaunt arms, and moaning in the wind, we feel sad, but then the consoling thought comes: Ah! next summer it will be all fresh and green and beautiful again! But if we pass through the woods in mid-summer, when the sun is warm and bright, when the birds are singing and the flowers are blooming, when the trees all around are clothed in the brightest green, and this tree alone remains still black and gaunt and bare. as if it were in the dead of winter,—ah! then we know for certain that the tree is dead—that it is fit only for the fire.

If we look around in the world, we see Jews, Turks, heathens. We see poor Protestants, who have been brought up in ignorance, prejudiced against the truth, who have, perhaps, never spoken with a priest, never been instructed in the faith. Their life has been one long winter; they have not been instructed; they have not received the sacraments. The bright, warm summer of God's grace has never yet shone on their souls. Though they are now sinners, they may yet become great saints. They have not sinned against the known truth; they have not sinned against the Holy Ghost.

But when a Catholic, who has had good pious parents, who has been well instructed in the faith, denies his religion, scoffs at the holy sacraments, breaks his baptismal vows, and perjures himself by joining an excommunicated secret society; when God speaks to him in a sermon, in a good book, through a good friend, perhaps through the death of some good friend or relative, he turns a deaf ear to the warning of his God, and stifles the voice of his conscience; when he stays away from Mass, from the sacraments, and from the sermons; when in sickness he murmurs and blasphemes God; when a Protestant, whose religious scruples of conscience torment him day and night, continues not to heed these scruples about his salvation; when he has almost daily opportunities to learn the true religion, and continues to neglect these opportunities; when he is even afraid of learning the truth, or, when he knows it, contradicts it against his conscience, and obscures it every day by unnatural crimes,—ah! then the signs are not hard to read! Such men sin against the known truth, against their conscience, against the Holy Ghost. They are trees, black and dead in the middle of summer. They are fit only for the fire! If lost, they are so through their own fault.

There is one who says: "If God foresees the sins of a man, and consequently his damnation, how can he be said to will the salvation of all men?" The answer to this question is easy, from what has already been said. God wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth, on condition, however, that they do his will. But he wills, at the same time, that those who obstinately persevere in their sins shall be damned. The fact that God, from all eternity, knows the sins of a man, and consequently foresees his damnation, is no reason why God should not wish for the salvation of all men. On the contrary, because God, from all eternity, foresees the sins and damnation of men, he is, from all eternity, touched with tender pity for them, and has decreed, from all eternity, that his well-beloved Son should become man and die on the cross to redeem them, and obtain for them the graces necessary for their salvation.

I see a man walk on the railroad. I see, at the same time, a train running in full speed in the direction in which that man walks. I see and hear how the engineer gives the signal to warn him in due time of the danger he runs of being killed. But I see he does not heed the warning. I feel pity for him, and, out of pity for him, I run toward him, and cry to him at the top of my voice to leave the railroad track. As he neither heeds the engineer's signal nor my own cries, I see at last, to my great grief, that he is killed; but I cannot help thinking it is not my fault nor the engineer's, it is his own fault. He could have escaped death, but he did not care.

In like manner, God foresees that so many men are running headlong into everlasting perdition. So, from the beginning of the world, he has never ceased to warn them, either by speaking to them in person, or through the patriarchs and prophets, through his Son Jesus Christ and his apostles and their lawful successors, or by great punishments and public calamities, or by the torments of their conscience, or by a good friend, etc.

It would, then, be blasphemous to say that God's foreknowledge of the sins of a man is the cause of his sins. The astronomer foretells the eclipse: does his foreseeing of the eclipse cause the eclipse? I see a man walk in the street: does my seeing him walk cause him to walk? Neither is God's foreseeing the sinful actions of a man the cause of those actions. His foreknowledge of the sins of man has made him say to every sinner what he said to Cain: "If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? But if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door? But the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it." (Gen. iv, 7.)

There are others who believe the blasphemous and diabolical doctrine of Luther and Calvin, who taught that

God had predestined certain men to hell in spite of their good lives, and others to heaven in spite of their wicked lives. Therefore, he who believes this blasphemous doctrine says: "I may commit whatever sins I please, without fear or remorse; for, if I am predestined to heaven, I will, notwithstanding, be infallibly saved, no matter what wickedness I commit. If I am among the reprobate, I shall be damned, no matter how virtuous a life I lead."

To this argument, a certain pious physician gave a good answer, if it can be called one. A man, by the name of Louis Landgrave, fell dangerously ill, and sent for the physician. The physician went immediately to see him, and asked him what he wanted with him: "I hope," said the sick man, "you will be able to restore me to health." "Oh!" said the physician, "what can I do for you? If your hour is come, you will die, no matter what remedies I may give you; but if your hour is not come, you will recover without any assistance from me." Remember, this was the same answer the sick man had previously given to a person who reprimanded him, in presence of the physician, for his wicked life: "If I am to be saved," said he, "I shall be so, no matter how wicked I may be; and, if I am to be damned, I shall be so, no matter how good I am." "Oh!" said the sick man, "do what you can for me! Perhaps your skill will restore me; but, if you do nothing for me, I shall surely die." The physician then, who was a pious and prudent man, said to him: "If you, then, think that you can recover your bodily health with the aid of medicine, why do you not try to restore your soul to health by a good confession?" The argument hit hard, the sick man sent immediately for a confessor, and became a true penitent.

A similar argument was used one day by the celebrated theologian, Duns Scotus, when, walking along the highway, he met a peasant who cursed and blasphemed horribly, because his oxen did not pull according to his liking. The good theologian lectured the angry boor on his hellish language, and told him that God would surely punish him, aye, punish him for all eternity, if he did not desist from his sinful habit. The ignorant peasant only became more enraged. "What!" cried he, "if God has predestined me for hell, he'll send me there anyhow; and if he has predestined me for heaven, I'll get there whether I give up cursing or not." The pious theologian listened patiently to the ignorant churl. "My friend," answered he in a kind tone, "if what you say be true, then why do you put yourself to all this trouble? Why plough and harrow your field? Why do you sow your seed? You might save that much seed. It would be so useful to you. Why are you so angry with your oxen? God knows everything that is going to happen. He knows whether you are going to have a good crop or not. Now, if he has predestined that you are to have a good crop next autumn, you shall have one, no matter what happens. Therefore, save your seed. Go home and rest. Give a holiday to your oxen. If God has predestined that you shall have no crop, you may sweat and toil and throw away your seed: your labor will be all in vain. Come! just try it once; go home, let your field alone."

The farmer shook his head, and looked incredulous. He knew better than that. "I do not pretend to fathom the inscrutable decrees of Providence," continued the theologian, "but one thing I can foretell with absolute certainty: If you do not sow, neither shall you reap." The farmer was silent. He knew that the theologian spoke the truth. "Know then," continued the pious Scotus, "God has resolved and predestined to save you if you keep his commandments, and has resolved and predestined to damn you if you break his commandments, lead a wicked life, and die a bad death." The farmer had received a practical lesson. He gave up cursing, and led, ever after, a virtuous life. (Hungari.)

Indeed, Almighty God predestines no one to be damned. "He may," says St. Augustine, "save a man without any merits on his part, because the Lord is good. But he cannot condemn a man who is not in mortal sin, because the Lord is just."

Luther and Calvin, therefore, make Almighty God a tyrant, by saying that he creates men for the purpose of tormenting them for all eternity. They make God a deceiver, by saying that he imposes on men a law which they never can, by any means in their power, observe. They make God unjust, by saying that he condemns men to eternal punishment, while, at the same time, they are not at liberty to avoid sin, but forced to commit it. They make God wicked, by saying that he himself first causes a man to sin, and then punishes him for it. Finally, they make God distribute his rewards unjustly, by saying that he gives his grace and heaven to the wicked, merely because they have faith; that they are justified, though they would not even be sorry for their sins.

All these assertions are so many blasphemies condemned by the holy Catholic Church.

There is another. He says: "I believe and understand that those who come to the use of reason and are lost, are lost through their own fault, because 'before man is life and death: that which he shall choose shall be given him.'

(Ecclus. xv, 18.) But now, there are many infants and incurable maniacs who die without baptism. How can it be said that God willed them to be saved, since they will never enter into the kingdom of heaven?" The answer to this objection is easy. There is a father. He has several sons. The youngest of them is carried off, and sold into slavery. The father gives a large sum of money to his oldest son to take it to the slave-holder, and to buy his son back. But he is robbed of all the money before he reaches the slave-holder; and thus the youngest son remains and dies in slavery, without ever again having seen his father. This good father assuredly showed his sincere desire to see his son restored to his liberty, and live happy with the rest of his brothers: he did all in his power to make him happy again.

Now, this father represents God the Father, who, as far as in him lies, sincerely wishes for the salvation of all infants, for he sent his Son to redeem them as well as grown people. It is not his fault if the price of their redemption did not reach them by baptism.

It is, moreover, a solid reflection that, for many, it would have been much better if they had never been born; if they had died, even without baptism, before they reached the age of reason. Our divine Saviour said of Judas who betrayed him: "It were better for him if he had never been born." (Matt. xxvi, 24.) Had he died before he saw the light of this world, he would not suffer now as much as he really suffers. But, as he grew up, he became a most wicked sinner, and suffers now in hell in proportion to his guilt. Hence St. Peter says: "It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than, after they had known it, to turn away from it." (2 Pet. ii, 21.) Infants, however, says St. Thomas, who die without baptism, will not suffer the pains of sense, they will even enjoy natural beatitude. There are some who hold that the earth, after its renovation, at the end of the world, shall be inhabited by the infants who died without baptism, and that they shall enjoy the delights of the purified elements. But, had they come to the age of reason, they might, like so many others, have offended Almighty God many times most grievously, and become the worst of reprobates. Most assuredly, the condition of unbaptized children in the other world is far preferable to the condition of Judas and millions of others, who lived and died like him.

A poor man had so many trials, that he began, at last, to doubt of God's providence. Being once overcome by sorrow and weariness, he fell asleep. As he slept, a young man approached, roused him, and beckoned him to follow. The guide then led him to the house of a rich man, where they were received with kind and generous hospitality. On going away, the guide took with him by stealth a costly golden goblet. Next day they entered a house, where they were received in a very uncouth manner, and where nought was heard but wrangling and cursing. Here, strange to say, the guide left the beautiful golden cup. On the following day they entered a house, where they were received with all possible kindness; and yet, on going away, the mysterious guide set fire to the house, so that it burned to the ground. On the fourth day they came to a house, where they were again received with the utmost cordiality. On going away, the guide requested his kind host to send some one with him to show him the way. The good master of the house sent with him his own son. The lad accompanied them till they came to a bridge. Here the strange guide seized the boy and hurled him headlong into the stream, where, in a few moments, he was drowned. At this the poor man was filled with horror. "O monster!" he cried, turning indignantly to his guide, "I would rather wander alone through the wildest desert than accompany you any longer. I am weary of your crimes. Henceforth we part forever!" As he spoke, the form of his guide began to change. Suddenly, his face shone like the sun, and his garments became whiter than snow. Then, gazing on the poor man with a smile of compassion, "Learn, O mortal!" he said, "the ways of divine providence and goodness. The golden goblet I took from our first host was poisoned. I took it, to save him from a miserable death, and, by a just judgment, left it in the house of the wicked blasphemer. Under the house that was burnt, is hidden a vast treasure, which the good master of the house will use for the benefit of his fellow-men. The lad who was cast into the stream would, had he grown up, have become the murderer of his father, the torment of his mother, and the disgrace of his family. Adore in silence the wonderful ways of God!" And after the angel had spoken, he disappeared. The poor man awoke from his dream. He had learned a golden lesson: never to murmur at the mysterious ways of Divine Providence, nor to put any more questions about the dealings of God with men. ("Gesta Romanorum.")

To conclude. In this life we can never have an infallible certainty of being in the state of grace, unless by a special revelation from God. It is true, St. Paul says: "The Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." (Rom. viii, 16.) But, though the testimony of the Holy Ghost is infallible in itself, still, as far as we are concerned, and know anything about it, we can only have a conjecture that we are in the state of grace. Moreover, as far as our knowledge goes, we cannot know whether that spirit is surely from God; for, many times the angel of darkness transforms himself into an angel of light to deceive us.

It cannot be said, however, that the uncertainty of eternal salvation makes us doubt of the divine promises to be saved by the merits of Jesus Christ; for, the divine promises can never fail. So, on God's part, we can never doubt that he will be wanting, by denying what he promised us. The doubt and fear are on our side, for we may be found wanting, by transgressing God's commandments, and thus losing his grace. In this case, God is not obliged to fulfil the promises made to us, but rather he is obliged to punish us for our infidelity; and, therefore, St. Paul exhorts us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. (Phil. ii, 12.) We are, therefore, certain of salvation, if we remain faithful to God. But, on the other hand, we should dread our perdition, if we are unfaithful.

Nor can it be said that this fear and uncertainty destroy peace of conscience; for peace of conscience in this life does not consist in a certain belief that we shall be saved: because this is not what God promises us. But it consists in the hope that he will save us, through the merits of Jesus Christ, if we strive to live well, and endeavor, by prayer, to obtain the divine assistance to persevere in a holy life.

"The sure way, then," says St. Alphonsus, "of obtaining salvation is to pray to God for light and strength to accomplish his will; but we should also pray with humility, confidence, and perseverance, in order to be heard. We should labor to work out our salvation as much as we can, without waiting for God to do everything, while we do nothing. Let the order of predestination be as it will, and let heretics say what they like, one thing is certain: that, if we are to be damned, it is our own sins that will damn us: 'The impious have perished by reason of their iniquity.' (Ps. lxxii, 19.) And, if we are to be saved, it is our good works that will save us: 'Wherefore, brethen, labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election' to life everlasting. (2 Pet. i, 10.) However, let us place all our hopes of salvation, not in our own works, but in the divine mercy and in the merits of Jesus Christ, and we shall surely be saved. If we are saved, then, it will be solely by the grace of God, for even our good works are but gifts of his grace; and, if we are lost, it is solely through our own sins."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL.

WE have seen that the grace of God is absolutely necessary for us to be saved; that grace is a gratuitous gift of God, merited for us by our Lord Jesus Christ; that, only through the merits of his passion and death, is the way of pardon open to us; and that all the graces we have or can have, are due to the shedding of his precious blood. Now, the question is, How are these merits of our Saviour to be applied to our souls, so that we may profit and be saved by them? The mere fact of his death does not save all; otherwise, all men would be saved, no matter who they are, or how they live, or how they die.

We believe, therefore, that the merits of Christ must be imparted to us, in order to become a healing and health-giving medicine to our souls. They must be applied to our souls, so as really to cleanse and transform them into true images of Christ crucified.

To illustrate our point: In a city there is a large drug-store, where medicine for the cure of every disease can be had. Now, what will it avail one who is very sick, and in need of medicine to be cured, to know that there is a drug-store where medicine for the cure of his sickness may be obtained, if he cannot procure any medicine? If he wishes to be cured, he must obtain the medicine by some means or other. It is just so with the graces of redemption which our blessed Saviour has merited for us by his death. They form an infinite, an inexhaustible, fountain of spiritual medicine for all. But this healing and health-giving medicine must be applied to our souls, else we shall perish. And for this reason, our Lord Jesus Christ has not only *merited* these graces for us, but has also established certain means called the sacraments, whereby these graces are communicated to us. If it is of the greatest importance to understand the necessity of grace for salvation, it is not less important to understand the doctrine of the sacraments, which are the means of obtaining the grace of God. The following story may assist us in understanding this all-important doctrine :—

Many years ago there lived a great king. This powerful monarch had an only son, to whom he gave every year several millions of dollars as a reward for his faithful services. The son put the money in the Royal Bank of his father, requesting him to distribute it among the poor of his kingdom. "Very well," said the king to his son, "I will do so, if you appoint agents in every city, and empower them to give money-orders on the Royal Bank. But, as there are seven classes of poor people in the kingdom, their wants must naturally be different. There should then be seven kinds of money-orders according to the different wants of the poor. Let the paper and the forms of these checks be such as you prescribe, and let each order be countersigned by one of your agents. Upon the presentation of such an order the cashier of the Royal Bank will pay to the bearer the money to which he is entitled."

The only means, then, for the poor people to obtain a portion of the money, was to procure a genuine money-order. Three things were required for a money-order to be good:

a particular kind of paper, a certain form prescribed by the king's son, and the signature of one of his agents.

The great king of our story represents God the Father, who is the Lord and King of heaven and earth. The son of the great king represents Jesus Christ, our dear Saviour, who is the only Son of God the Father. The faithful services of the king's son represent the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ. The millions of dollars which the son of the king received every year for his faithful services, represent the infinite merits and graces which Jesus Christ acquired every year of his earthly career. The Royal Bank of the great king represents the heavenly bank, or immense treasure of graces deposited by Jesus Christ with his heavenly Father. The seven classes of the poor in the kingdom of the great king represent the spiritual wants of us poor sinners. The seven kinds of money-orders by which the poor obtained a certain amount of money, represent the seven sacraments which Jesus Christ instituted as so many means by which he might confer his special graces upon the different classes of Christian society.

The agents of the king's son, appointed in every city to give checks on the Royal Bank, represent the pope, the bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic Church, whom Christ has appointed as the only lawful agents for his sacraments. The cashier of the Royal Bank represents God the Holy Ghost, who is the giver of grace. The money received upon the presentation of the money-order to the Royal Bank, represents the graces communicated to the soul by the worthy reception of a sacrament. The three things required for a genuine money-order represent the three things necessary to constitute a sacrament. The necessity of having an order to obtain a portion of the money represents the necessity of receiving the sacraments to obtain the grace of God.

1. What, then, is a sacrament?

A sacrament is an outward sign, ordained by Jesus Christ as a means to convey his grace to our souls.

A wise man treats his fellow-men according to their characters, dispositions, and education. Our divine Saviour, who is infinite wisdom itself, also treats men according to their nature. Now, in our present state of moral weakness and corruption, our soul is in such subjection to the body, that things purely spiritual seldom make a proper impression on us. The greater part of men are so much enslaved to their senses, that they seem incapable of comprehending anything but what falls under the notice of their senses. Hence the great truths of religion, which they are obliged to know, must be rendered intelligible by suitable parables and familiar similitudes taken from sensible objects. On this account, Jesus Christ, out of condescension to our weak understanding, often used parables and similitudes, whereby to illustrate his doctrine and make it better understood. For instance, to show us the necessity of grace for the performance of works meritorious of heaven, he compares us to the branches of the vine, and says: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me." (John xv, 4.)

Out of the same kind condescension to our weakness, he often used sensible things, in order to bestow through them temporal and spiritual blessings upon men. When he intended to cure a man born blind, he made clay by mixing spittle with the dust of the earth, and then touched with it the blind man's eyes, and bade him go and wash his eyes in Soloe. The blind man did so, and obtained his sight. When our Lord intended to give speech and hearing to a man deaf and dumb, he put his finger into the ears and touched the tongue with spittle, saying, "*Ephpheta*" ("be opened"), and the ears of the deaf were opened, and the tongue of the dumb was unloosed.

The sick were brought to him, that he might cure them by his touch. Jesus touched them, and they were restored to health. A woman was cured of an issue of blood by touching our Saviour's garment. To raise to life the daughter of Jairus, Jesus took her by the hand, and by this divine touch she was restored to life. When about to make Lazarus return to life, he spoke the words, "Lazarus, come forth!" At these mighty words Lazarus rose from the grave. The ten lepers who had come to Jesus to be cured, were told to go and show themselves to the priests. They were cured whilst going to the priests.

In like manner, our dear Lord attached to outward signs spiritual blessings, such as the forgiveness of sins, or the gift of the Holy Ghost. He granted to Magdalen the forgiveness of her sins by speaking these words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He gave the Holy Ghost to his apostles by breathing upon them. It is thus that he attached temporal and spiritual blessings to particular outward signs.

It is not necessary for him to use outward signs or actions as the means of bestowing his graces upon us; he can bestow them by a simple act of his will. But, for us, it is most desirable that he should annex his graces to outward signs or actions, in order that we may be certain of receiving his grace whenever we use those signs or actions. Nothing, therefore, is more natural than the doctrine of the Catholic Church, that our dear Saviour Jesus Christ has instituted outward signs or actions, called sacraments, as the instruments that convey his grace to our souls. The word "sacrament" means something sacred and mysterious. As a person, who has put money in a bank, draws that money by means of a written order, so it is the will of our dear Saviour that the graces of salvation which he treasured up for us with his heavenly Father, should be drawn by means of those outward signs to which he has attached them, that is, by the sacraments. A sacrament, therefore, as the catechism says, is an outward sign, ordained by Jesus Christ to convey his grace to us.

2. How many things are necessary to constitute a sacrament?

Three: 1, *an outward sign*; 2, *an inward grace*; 3, *the institution by Jesus Christ.*

From what has just been said, it will be seen that three things are required to constitute a sacrament: 1, an outward sign; 2, an inward grace; 3, the institution by Jesus Christ.

1. By an outward sign is meant something that is sensible, falling under the senses,—something that we can see or hear, or touch. Although our dear Lord is perfectly free to attach his grace to any kind of sign, yet he did not choose any kind of sign indiscriminately, in order to communicate grace through it; but he chose such outward signs as fitly express and indicate the invisible grace which is to be bestowed by them. By water, for instance, the stains of the body are washed away. Our dear Saviour, therefore, chose water, and the words, "I baptize thee," etc., as the outward or visible sign of the sacrament of baptism, as they

very sensibly represent, and aptly indicate, the effect of baptism; that is, the purifying of the soul from the stains of sin. The outward sign of each sacrament applied to the person who is to receive the sacrament, is called the matter of the sacrament, and the set form of words to be used in applying the matter is called the form of the sacrament. Thus, the matter of the sacrament of baptism is the water, applied to the person who is being baptized (the water itself is called the *remote* matter, and its application, or the ablution, the *proximate* matter), and the form of this sacrament are the words, "I baptize thee," etc., pronounced while the water is being poured. "Withhold the word," says St. Augustine, "and what is the water but mere water? The word is joined to the element, and it becomes a sacrament." (Tract. 80 in Joan.) Thus the word, united to something material, produces sacramental grace, and represents at the same time the mystery of the Incarnation. As the Eternal Word has procured our salvation by his union with human nature, so the priest's word, joined to the material element, procures us grace.

2. There is, therefore, a vast difference between natural and sacred signs, or the sacraments. Smoke, for instance, is the natural sign of fire, but it does not contain or communicate what it indicates; that is, fire. A sacrament, or sacred sign, however, not only outwardly indicates the graces which we receive, but really confers them upon our soul. The water of baptism, for example, not only represents the cleansing of the soul, but, united with the words, "I baptize thee," really effects that cleansing. The sacraments, then, are not empty signs, but they have the power of producing the effects which they signify.

3. As the sacraments are the means by which the merits

of Christ are applied to the soul, it is clear that no one but God has the power to institute sacraments; that is, attach to outward signs the power of conferring grace upon our soul. For, as there is no natural relation or connection between the outward rite or ceremony, and the invisible effect produced in the soul, the sacraments derive all their efficacy from the free choice and appointment of Jesus Christ, who positively wills that, if those sacred signs are properly applied to us, they shall communicate the graces which he has promised to bestow through them upon our soul. Of baptism, for instance, Christ has declared: "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." (Mark xvi, 16). Of the Holy Eucharist, he has also promised: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. . . . He hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi, 57, 55.) Of penance, likewise, he has promised to his apostles, and, through them, to all their lawful successors: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (John xx, 23.) Of extreme unction: "And if he (the sick person) be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (James v, 15.) Now, Christ says of his promises: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." (Mark xiii, 31.) For, "as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return no more thither, but water the earth and make it to spring and give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: *so shall my word be*, which shall go forth from my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it." (Isa. lv, 10, 11.) As the sun, the moon, and the stars appeared at the very moment God said, "Let there be light made," so also, and just as quickly, does the grace of God enter the soul at the very moment in which it receives a sacrament. Therefore, "if any one shall assert," says the Council of Trent, "that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify, or that they do not confer that grace upon those who put no obstacle in the way, let him be anathema." (Sess. vii, de Sacr., Can. 6.)

Thus we see that, as the catechism says, three things are necessary to constitute a sacrament: the outward sign, its institution by Christ, and its power of giving grace to the soul.

3. What are the effects of the sacraments?

1, *All the sacraments produce sanctifying grace in those who receive them with proper dispositions;* 2, *each sacrament gives a grace peculiar to itself.*

All the sacraments either give sanctifying grace to those who receive them with proper dispositions, or they increase that grace. Two of them, viz., baptism and penance, give sanctifying grace to those who do not possess it. They are given us to raise the soul from the death of sin to the life of grace. If they are received by persons who already possess sanctifying grace, they increase this grace. The other sacraments are intended to increase the grace which the recipient already possesses.

A second effect of the sacraments is that which is called sacramental grace; that is, a grace peculiar to each one of the sacraments. This grace peculiar to each sacrament is a particular actual grace which strengthens the worthy receiver, and enables him to perform the duties, and accomplish the ends, for which each particular sacrament is intended. Thus, in baptism, we receive not only sanctifying, but also a special, grace, by which we are strengthened to lead a Christian life.

In confirmation we receive, not only an increase of sanctifying grace, but also a special aid to profess our faith in the midst of all dangers, and to resist the enemies of our souls. We receive, in holy communion, a particular grace to preserve and nourish the life of the soul and the love of God; in penance, to preserve us from relapsing into sin; in extreme unction, to overcome the assaults of the devil in the hour of death; and in holy orders and matrimony, to discharge properly all the duties of these two states of life.

4. What sin is it to receive a sacrament unworthily?
It is a grievous sin, called sacrilege.

In order to receive the abundant graces of a sacrament, coöperation is required on the part of the receiver; not, indeed, that the efficacy of the sacrament, considered in itself, depends at all on the recipient—this efficacy it has entirely from Christ's appointment; but because its salutary effects, in each particular case, depend upon the disposition with which it is received. As wood, which is not seasoned, does not burn well, because the moisture which is in it resists the action of the fire; or as oiled paper does not take ink from the pen of even the most skilful writer, so a soul which is not properly disposed cannot receive the grace of God by means of a sacrament so long as it is in a disposition which is incompatible with divine grace. Many souls are almost as little benefited by the sacraments as the walls of the church in which they receive them; because those souls are as hard and as cold as the very walls themselves.

To understand the dispositions which are necessary for the reception of the sacraments, we must distinguish between the *valid* and *lawful*, or *useful*, reception of the sacraments. A sacrament is *validly* received, when the matter and form instituted by Christ are duly applied by the minister of the sacrament to one who is capable and willing to receive it. A sacrament is lawfully or worthily received, when, besides what is required for its valid reception, there are also in the receiver the dispositions necessary to obtain the grace of the sacrament. Thus, he who receives confirmation in the state of mortal sin receives, indeed, the sacrament *validly*, that is to say, he is really confirmed; but, instead of receiving the grace of confirmation, he commits a grievous sin, called sacrilege. However, if he receives confirmation in the state of grace, he receives the sacrament both validly and lawfully; that is, he is really confirmed, and receives the grace attached to this sacrament. A sacrament, therefore, may be received validly without being received lawfully; but it cannot be received lawfully without also being received validly. To receive baptism validly, the recipient needs only to have the intention to receive it; but to receive any of the other sacraments, it is also necessary for the receiver to have received baptism.

There is nothing that gives more honor to God, and contributes more to our own spiritual welfare, than the devout reception of the sacraments; and there is, on the contrary, nothing more injurious to God, and more hurtful to our souls, than the unworthy reception of a sacrament. You will, perhaps, ask in astonishment: "Are there, then, people so wicked as knowingly and wilfully to receive a sacrament unworthily?" Alas! there are but too many. I do not mean to say that there are many who receive a sacrament unworthily, out of pure malice, with the express purpose of dishonoring God—though even that has happened; but I do say that there are many who wish to enjoy the privileges of a Christian, whilst leading an immoral life, and who dare to receive the sacraments in hearts defiled with sin unrepented of, and who, instead of receiving the divine grace, render themselves more guilty before God by their unworthy reception of the sacraments.

5. How many sacraments are there ?

There are seven : Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

There are seven sacraments : 1. Baptism, which makes us Christians. 2. Confirmation, which makes us soldiers of Christ. 3. Holy Eucharist, which feeds our souls. 4. Penance, which forgives our sins. 5. Extreme Unction, which helps the sick. 6. Holy Orders, which make bishops and priests. 7. Matrimony, which marries people.

Each one of the sacraments has a peculiar object and excellence of its own, distinct from all the others. All of them are necessary for the Church as a body, but they are not all necessary for every one of her members. They are not all equal in necessity nor in excellence. Baptism is the most necessary of the sacraments, because, without it, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; and the Blessed Eucharist is the most excellent of all the sacraments, because it contains Jesus Christ himself, the Author of grace and of the sacraments, while the other sacraments are only channels of divine grace.

6. How do we know that there are seven sacraments ?

From the constant and infallible teaching of the Church.

The Catholic Church has always acknowledged seven sacraments, she has always administered seven; and the

Council of Trent has, in express terms, defined that there are seven sacraments. "If any one shall assert," says the council, "that the sacraments of the New Law were not all of them instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord; or that there are more or fewer than seven, viz., baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, order, and matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament,—let him be anathema." (Sess. vii, c. 1.)

As the sacraments are free institutions of Christ, he might have appointed any number he chose; but, as a matter of fact, seven only have been instituted—neither more nor less. Although there is no absolute reason, except the divine appointment, why there should be seven rather than any other number of sacraments, the catechism of the Council of Trent points out that there is a fitness in this number, inasmuch as the seven sacraments supply the wants of our spiritual life, which correspond to the wants of our bodily life:—

1. In order to live in this world, we must be born. Now, we are born in the state of sin. To live, then, the life of grace, we must be spiritually born; that is, purified from our guilt. Now, we receive this spiritual birth in the sacrament of baptism.

2. When born into this world, we remain for some time weak and helpless creatures. We have to grow up and acquire strength, in order to be able to perform the labors and duties of our state of life. In like manner, when spiritually born, our life of grace is rather weak and feeble: we are in a state of spiritual infancy. We are, indeed, Christians and servants of Christ; but we have to become strong and perfect Christians, and soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Now, this spiritual strength is given us in the sacrament of confirmation.

3. In order to preserve our earthly life, and to maintain and increase its strength, it is necessary for us often to take nourishing food, as otherwise we should soon languish and die. So, in like manner, in order to maintain and to perfect our spiritual life received in baptism and strengthened in confirmation, we need a spiritual food—a continuous supply of graces. Our souls must often be nourished with "the bread of life;" and this is given to us in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

4. Our bodily strength may be great, and our health may be excellent; yet, for all that, we are liable to become dangerously sick. Then we need a healing remedy—a medicine which restores our bodily health.

In like manner, our spiritual strength may have become very great; sanctifying grace may have been increased in us, so as to render us very perfect; yet, for all that, we are liable to lose this spiritual strength and perfection by falling into mortal sin. We then need a healing remedy to restore us to the state of grace, and to enable us to partake again of the "bread of life," with advantage to our souls. Now, Jesus Christ has provided for us that necessary and healing remedy in the sacrament of penance.

5. But, at last, we must die. Almighty God has passed the sentence of death upon all mankind. Sooner or later, we must yield to the execution of that sentence. When on our death-bed, it is difficult to avoid sinking under the pains, infirmities, and languor, with which we are then afflicted. We need special help and consolation. Our soul, too, is then in the greatest distress; for the devil will then do all in his power to make us lose the grace of God. Being weakened

by disease, we are less able to resist his temptations. Now, the special strength and consolation which we then need, are given us in the sacrament of extreme unction.

6. Society requires magistrates for the maintenance of the laws, and the preservation of good order. In religion, likewise, we need spiritual rulers, teachers, and guides. These are supplied, together with the powers necessary for them, by the sacrament of holy orders.

7. Almighty God instituted marriage for the legitimate propagation of mankind. On the proper discharge of the duties of the married state, and especially on the manner in which parents bring up their children, depend the happiness of mankind and the temporal good of society. To fulfil their duties properly, and especially to bring up their children religiously, married persons need special graces. In the sacrament of matrimony they receive the grace necessary to be able to supply the Church with good Christians, and heaven with saints.

Thus we see how the seven sacraments serve to sanctify every stage and condition of life.

7. How are the seven sacraments divided?

Into sacraments of the living and sacraments of the dead, and those which can be received only once, and those which can be received more than once.

The division of the sacraments into sacraments of the dead and sacraments of the living, does not mean, as might be supposed, that some sacraments can be received after death, but it means that two of them do not require that we should be in a state of sanctifying grace when we receive them; whilst, for the other five,—the sacraments of the living,—it is necessary for us to be in the state of sanctifying grace, in order to receive them worthily. As some of the sacraments can be received but once, and others more than once, they are also divided into those which can be received only once, and into those which can be received more than once.

8. Which are the sacraments of the living?

Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

9. Why are they called sacraments of the living?

Because, in order to receive them worthily, we must be in the state of grace.

These five sacraments presuppose the supernatural life of grace in the soul as a disposition for their lawful reception, and, therefore, are called sacraments of the living. They are intended to increase the grace which the recipient already possesses. The sacraments of the living may, however, according to the commonly received opinion, accidentally remit mortal sin, and restore spiritual life to the soul, like the sacrament of penance. For example: a person believes himself in the state of grace, but, in reality, is guilty of some hidden mortal sin. Now, if he receives a sacrament of the living, with attrition at least, it is generally believed that he obtains the pardon of his hidden sin, provided he be so disposed that he would go to confession if he knew that he needed it, and were able to have recourse to it. It is not the state of sin, but the affection to mortal sin, which is the obstacle to the entrance of grace into the soul. If the state of sin were itself an obstacle to grace, it is clear that every sacrament would then necessarily require to be received in the state of sanctifying grace; and, consequently, no sacrament would be able to produce the first grace, since the very want of the first grace would be an obstacle to its reception. The common doctrine, then, of the most celebrated divines, such as St. Thomas and St. Alphonsus Liguori: that, under certain circumstances, a sacrament of the living may confer the first grace, rests upon the teaching of the Council of Trent, that the sacraments infallibly produce their effect in those who do not place an obstacle in the way. Now, those who are not conscious of being in the state of mortal sin, and who have attrition, cannot be said to place an obstacle in the way of the fruitful reception of the sacraments. If, perhaps, they were not at first sufficiently contrite, yet received the sacrament devoutly and reverently, they will obtain the grace of charity, which will perfect their sorrow, and complete the remission of their sins.

10 Which are the sacraments of the dead?
Baptism and Penance:

11. Why are they called sacraments of the dead?
1, *Because, when receiving them, we need not be in the state of grace;* 2, *because they restore to the soul the life of grace.*

All the sacraments, as has already been remarked, either give or increase sanctifying grace, if they are received with proper dispositions. Two of them, viz., baptism and penance, have been instituted to give sanctifying grace to those who do not possess it. They are given to raise the soul from the death of sin to the life of grace, and hence they are called sacraments of the dead. If, however, they are received by persons who already possess sanctifying grace, they increase this grace. The habitual or sanctifying grace, which is given to the soul when it is raised from spiritual death to spiritual life, is called first grace, whilst every increase of that grace is called second grace. Hence it is commonly said, the sacraments of the dead give the first grace, and the sacraments of the living give the second grace.

12. Which sacraments can be received only once?
Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

13. Why can they be received but once?
Because they impress on the soul a character or mark which can never be effaced.

The best and most valuable property of the sacraments is that they confer grace on the worthy receiver. But there are three of them, baptism, confirmation, and holy orders, which, besides grace, confer also a *character* on those who receive them. This character, says St. Thomas Aquinas, is derived from the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ. He founded the Christian religion. He is its celestial Pontiff. He came to teach us to serve and worship his heavenly Father according to his example. This supreme worship is the principal object of our life.

There is a king. He appoints one of his subjects to a certain office which gives him a right to perform certain functions. So he decorates him with a certain mark or sign by which he is distinguished from all those who are not of the same office. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of heaven and earth, acts in the same manner in regard to those whom, by his grace, he has called to serve and worship his heavenly Father in the manner in which he wishes to be served and worshipped. We are to resemble our High-Priest. He therefore decorates us, as it were, with a certain character or mark, by which we are distinguished from those who do not serve and worship God according to his will.

The professional sign or mark, worn by every officer in every rank of life, is but a material characteristic sign. The character or mark, however, which Christ impresses by certain sacraments upon the soul of every true servant and worshipper of his heavenly Father, is something, not material, but spiritual; it indicates that the duties and functions of a Christian are to serve and worship God according to the rights and doctrine of the Christian religion. Now, according to Christian doctrine, a Christian truly worships God by receiving or administering the sacraments. The power to receive the sacraments is called a passive power, whilst that of administering them is called an active power. This passive, as well as this active, power, then, is a spiritual one, rendering us fit to receive or to give the sacraments according to the true worship of the Christian religion.

This spiritual character will last as long as the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and the soul marked with it, will last. To Jesus Christ is given all power in heaven and on earth. He is the splendor of his Father's glory, and the figure of his substance; he is eternally invested with the sacerdotal character, so that the Christian who receives this sacramental character resembles him, and participates of the fulness of his grace and glory, by true faith and perfect charity. The sacramental character is impressed on the intellectual, rational faculty of the soul, which is the foundation of faith; and as the spiritual intellect can never become extinct (for the soul is immortal), so the character of the sacrament remains indelible. Hence, neither the enormity of sins, nor any duration of time, can ever efface it. Therefore, whatever may be the crime of a person, or if he had the misfortune to become a heretic or an apostate, after receiving the sacraments whose character is indelible, —as baptism, confirmation, and holy orders,—these sacraments are never repeated when he has the happiness to return to the bosom of the one true and apostolic Church. Grace is lost by mortal sin, but the sacramental character remains forever.

In heaven there will be no necessity for external worship, but the end for which it was established will last eternally. It is the same with the sacramental character, which is the distinctive sign of the true worshippers of God. It will remain eternally for the glory of the faithful, and for the condemnation of the wicked. It will shine like a brilliant garland of diamonds on the forehead of the just, and will be a sign of reprobation on the forehead of the impious. The military standard remains, even after the battle, as a sign of glory and triumph for the conquerors, and for the disgrace and confusion of the vanquished. The sacramental character, therefore, will be a glorious sign for the true children of God, for all eternity. Hence the apostle says: "It is God that confirmeth us with you in Christ, and that hath anointed us, who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. i, 21, 22.) "But the children of perdition will bear the frightful image of the infernal beast." (Apoc. xiii.)

It is only the sacraments of baptism and confirmation and holy orders that confer this sacred character, because they particularly consecrate us to the divine service. The reason why the other sacraments do not impress such a spiritual mark is, because they do not so directly consecrate us to the worship of God. Penance, for instance, does but restore us to the condition in which we were before committing sin. The Holy Eucharist as a sacrifice has undoubtedly direct reference to divine worship, but it does not confer a sacramental character. It is the end, essence, and consummation of religious worship and of all the sacraments. There are only three of them that give us a special, distinctive mark of consecration to the divine worship, namely: baptism, which marks us as the children of God, and entitles us to the reception of the other sacraments; confirmation, which enrolls us among the soldiers of Jesus Christ, and enables us to fight in his service; and holy orders, which distinguish those who have received this sacrament as the ministers of Christ, and give them power to administer the sacraments and to perform other sacred duties. When, therefore, we shall all appear before God, the souls of those who have been baptized, confirmed, or made priests, will be immediately seen and distinguished from all those who have never been baptized, confirmed, or ordained priests. To use an imperfect comparison: as the features point out the children of one family, so will this mark point out all those who have been made the children of God by baptism, soldiers of Christ by confirmation, and priests by holy orders.

As the marks or character of Christian, of soldier, and of priest of Christ, can never be effaced, the sacraments which impress them can never be conferred a second time; and to confer any of them a second time would be the sin of sacrilege.

Here it may be asked, How can persons who have had the misfortune to receive these sacraments unworthily, afterward obtain those graces? As the sacraments have been validly received, they confer grace; but this grace remains in abeyance until the soul recovers the friendship of God by true repentance. So long as the necessary dispositions are wanting in the soul, the grace of these sacraments remains, like a stream which cannot flow on in its natural channel on account of some obstruction which it meets; but, as soon as the obstacle is removed, it resumes its natural course. Thus, he who receives confirmation in a state of mortal sin does not receive any sanctifying or habitual grace till the sin has been remitted, either by an act of perfect contrition, or by the worthy reception of the sacrament of penance. But as soon as the impediment is removed by the forgiveness of sin, the grace belonging to confirmation is bestowed on the soul.

To sum up. The Scripture tells us that, after God had created the world, he rested from his labors. (Gen.) Nevertheless, our divine Saviour assures us that he and his heavenly Father are "working continually." (St. John.) And, indeed, if we look around us, we shall see that the work of creation is being constantly renewed. Year after year, the living breath of spring brings a new face to the earth. The trees and plants and flowers bud and bloom again. Every shrub, every animal, every human being that is brought forth into the world, is a new creation. The very work of *preservation* is an unbroken continuance of the divine creative act. The entire visible world is but an image of the invisible spiritual world. The work of redemption is a second and more perfect creation. And just as God continually renews the work of creation, so also does he continually renew the divine work of the redemption. This unbroken renewal of the work of the redemption is wrought in the sacraments.

It is not with our Redeemer as with some great man who lived and suffered eighteen hundred years ago, and of whom nothing remains but an historical remembrance. Jesus is ever living in his Church, and the Church is his living figure. It is through her ministers that he manifests himself, and works through all ages; through them that he perpetually applies to our souls the merits of his passion and death by means of the sacraments.

In baptism, he perpetually adopts the children of men as the children of God. In confirmation, he strengthens the growing youth with the power of his spirit. In holy communion, he nourishes the spiritual life of the Christian. In penance, he pardons the contrite sinner. In matrimony, he breathes into the bridegroom and the bride a higher conception of the nuptial relations. In extreme unction, he consoles the dying; and in holy orders, he institutes the organs whereby he works all this with an activity that never wearies.

No doubt, the grace of God, by which we are restored to his friendship and cleansed from our sins, is the most important benefit we can receive from him in this life; and when we have lost his friendship by sin, nothing can be a greater comfort to us than a well-grounded confidence that we are reconciled to him again. Now, as Jesus Christ has instituted the sacraments with the express promise that, when they are worthily received by a person, he will never fail to communicate his grace to the worthy receiver, he has given us a great source of consolation in the institution of the sacraments. It is true, we can never have an absolute certainty of receiving the grace, because we can never have an absolute certainty that our dispositions are what they ought to be; yet, as we are absolutely certain of the effects of the sacraments, and can have a very high probability of our own good dispositions, this degree of certainty,—the highest which God allows us in this world,—is fully sufficient for a well-grounded hope and confidence in God's mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ. It is thus that, on the one hand, we are kept humble, and made "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" whilst, on the other, we have sufficient ground to hope for mercy, and to be filled with great consolation. Had the sacraments been instituted for the infallible cure, and as a preventive, of bodily diseases, all men would have recourse to them. O unspeakable blindness of men! The sacraments infallibly cure and prevent the diseases of the soul; and yet, the greater part of men do not believe in them, many neglect them and receive them but seldom, and with improper dispositions. This is the reason why thousands of souls go to hell every day.

CHAPTER IV.

ON BAPTISM.

1. Which is the first and most necessary sacrament?
Baptism is the first sacrament, because, before it, no other sacrament can be received; and it is also the most necessary sacrament, because, without it, no one can be saved.

We have explained the nature, necessity, and efficacy of the sacraments in general. We now naturally give an account of each one in particular. Baptism comes first. It is so particularly the first, that we cannot receive any other sacrament before it. To attempt to give or to receive any other sacrament before baptism, would be a worthless ceremony. Were a person, for instance, who has not been baptized, to receive holy orders, he would not be a priest—he would not even be a Christian. It is only by baptism that we are entitled to the privilege of receiving the other sacraments.

Baptism is also the most necessary of all sacraments, for, without it, no one can be saved. The reason of this is, because baptism has been ordained by Jesus Christ as the only means of receiving the forgiveness of original sin, and of all the sins committed before baptism: "Go," said he to his apostles, "into the whole world, and teach all nations, and baptize them. . . . He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not" (and consequently will not be baptized) "shall be condemned." (Mark xvi, 15, 16). Whoever, therefore, dies without baptism will remain fixed for all eternity in the state of original sin, and also of actual sin, if he has committed any; for God, who is infinite holiness itself, can never unite himself to a soul that is in sin and at enmity with him. For this reason, Nicodemus was told by our Lord: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost" (that is, in baptism), "he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John iii, 5.) After his miraculous conversion St. Paul went to Damascus, and prayed and fasted there for three days. But, as neither faith, nor repentance, nor fasting, nor prayer, is of any avail to salvation without baptism, Ananias was sent by our Lord to tell him "to be baptized and wash away his sins." (Acts xxii, 16.) The Jews, who were converted by St. Peter's first sermon, asked: "Men and brethren, what must we do?" St. Peter answered: "Do penance and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of your sins." (Acts ii, 38.)

This necessity of baptism extends to all persons, even to infants; for they, too, come into the world "as children of wrath," having the stain and guilt of original sin, and being in a state of separation from God, and subjected to the sentence of temporal and eternal death decreed by God against all the descendants of Adam; and they remain in this state of separation from God until they receive the inestimable blessing of a new birth by water and the Holy Ghost.

Our divine Saviour wishes little children to come to him, and declares that of such is the kingdom of God; but he recognizes it to be in the power of others to allow or prevent it: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." (Mark x, 14.) Parents and guardians can "suffer them to come" to Jesus, by having them baptized; they can also prevent or "forbid them" by neglecting to secure this blessing for them through their own indifference or unbelief; but they cannot, by their heretical or infidel opinions, change the law of Christ, which requires both infants and adults to be baptized in order to be saved. Hence it has always been the practice of the Church to baptize infants soon after their birth. This shows her belief that, on account of original sin, they cannot enter heaven if they die without baptism. (Conc. Trent., Sess. vii, Can. 5.) Therefore, "if you wish," says St. Augustine, "to be a Catholic, do not believe, do not say, do not teach, that infants who die before they are baptized can obtain the remission of original sin" (Lib. iii, de Orig. Animæ); and: "Whoever says that infants themselves are made alive in Jesus Christ when they die without baptism, opposes directly all that the apostles have preached; he condemns the whole Church, in which they hasten to baptize little infants, because they believe that these infants cannot otherwise have life in Jesus Christ." (Letter clxvi.)

God has sometimes wrought miracles, to show how necessary baptism is for the salvation even of little children. It has happened that some of these poor little infants, having died without being baptized, were miraculously restored to life. St. Augustine relates an interesting instance of this kind. At Uzale, a woman had an infant son. She so ardently desired to make him a good Christian, that she had him already inscribed on the roll of the catechumens. Unfortunately he died before they had time to baptize him. His mother was overwhelmed with grief; still more for his being deprived of eternal life, than because he was dead to her. Full of confidence, she took the dead child, and publicly carried it to the Church of St. Stephen, the first martyr. There she prayed for the son whom she had just lost; and this was her prayer: "Holy martyr, thou seest that I am left without any consolation; for I cannot say that my son is gone before me, since thou knowest he is lost: and this is the reason why I weep. Give me back my son, so that I may see him in heaven in the presence of Him who crowned thee!" Whilst praying in this way, and shedding bitter tears, her son moved, uttered a cry, and was suddenly restored to life. And because his mother had said, "Thou knowest why I ask him back," God was pleased to show that she spoke sincerely. She immediately carried him to the priest. He was baptized, sanctified, anointed, confirmed, and, after thus receiving the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, he died again. The pious mother, happy in seeing him regenerated in the waters of baptism, took care not to lament his death; on the contrary, she followed him to the grave with a gay and smiling air, because she knew very well that he was not going into a cold grave, but to dwell with the angels in heaven. (Sermo 324.)

A similar miracle was witnessed by the whole parish of St. Martin-des-Champs in Paris. This miracle took place in 1393, through the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God; and that prodigy is stamped with the character of truth. An unfortunate woman, having forgotten the laws of religion and honor, from one crime precipitated herself into another. She even went so far as to stifle the cries of nature. To save her reputation, and to rid herself of a little girl whom she had brought into the world, she had the horrible barbarity to take the life of the helpless child, by thrusting a piece of linen into its mouth, so that it could not breathe and was smothered. Then she had it secretly carried out of the city and buried in a heap of manure, near the door of St. Martin-des-Champs. Providence so arranged it, that a huntsman passed that way some time after: one of his dogs stopped at the place, began to smell round the heap of dirt, scattered it with his paws, and exposed the child to view. People ran from all parts; and as there was no proof that baptism had been administered, it was thought that the body ought not to be buried in consecrated ground. Whilst the people were consulting about it, a woman, touched with compassion, cried out that it was a great pity an innocent creature should be deprived of the sight of God by the fault of its parents; and, instantly, taking the little body in her arms, she proposed to carry it to the church, and ask the Blessed Virgin to intercede for it. It was a second prodigy, remarks the historian of the time of Charles VI, that, of more than four hundred persons who heard what the woman said, not one opposed it; and that, on the contrary, all of them proceeded to the Church of St. Martin-des-Champs. When they reached the church, the pious woman laid the child before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and the religious and all present were asked to pray for it. At the end of some moments the protection of Mary was publicly manifested: the dead infant gave signs of life; it made an effort to throw out the cloth that had stifled it, and succeeded; then it gave a loud cry. This was the signal for universal acclamation; all the bells were rung, the *Te Deum* was sung, and, as the crowd was so dense that not a step could be taken in the church toward the baptismal font, the child was baptized at the foot of the altar, and received the name of Mary. It lived three hours after, in the sight of every one. This child of benediction then died, and, the day after, it was buried, in the church, under the very altar at which it had been baptized. (Debussi, *Nouveau Mois de Marie*, 132.)

As the lives of all infants are too frail to be depended on, it is the duty of parents to see that the children that are born to them, should also soon be born to God by baptism. In the time of St. Cyprian, a certain bishop, named Fidus, maintained that baptism ought not to be given to infants before the eighth day after their birth. St. Cyprian assembled a council at Carthage to discuss this opinion, which was condemned by all the bishops. "The grace and mercy of God," says the council, "ought not to be refused to any child of man born of men; for, as the Lord says in the Gospel, 'The Son of man is not come to destroy men's souls, but to save them;' so, as far as depends on us, no soul is to be lost by useless delays." (St. Cyprian, epist. lix.) Let it, then, be remembered, says St. Alphonsus, that to put off the baptism of infants for more than ten or eleven days is, according to the more common opinion of theologians, a mortal sin, unless there is some extraordinary reason for deferring it.

St. Gregory Nazianzen sharply rebukes those mothers who, from too great a solicitude for the health of their children, put off their baptism, on the plea that their life is too delicate to pass through the ceremonies of baptism. "Do not," he says, "expose your children to evil, but sanctify them and consecrate them to the Holy Ghost from their tenderest years. Do you, indeed, fear to seal them with the seal of God on account of their weak nature? O ye mothers of little faith! Ann, before Samuel was born, promised him to God; and, when born, instantly consecrated him to the Lord. She brought him up to become a priest, and clothed him in the garb of a priest. She put her trust in God, and disregarded human fears and considerations." (Orat. 40, t. i, p. 648.) Indeed, "if the Jew," says St. Basil, "does not put off the circumcision of his child on account of the threat of God that every soul which is not circumcised on the eighth day shall be destroyed out of its people (Gen. xvii, 14), why is it that thou delayest baptism, although thou hast heard from the Lord himself: 'Amen, amen, I say unto you, unless a man be born of water and the Holy Ghost, he shall not enter the kingdom of God'?" (T. ii, p. 1, Hom. in Sanct. Bapt., nn. 1, 2, p. 159.) Hence, "no one," says St. Cyprian, "should be denied access to the grace of God, particularly infants, who, by their tears and cries after their birth, seem to implore our help in the most moving manner. They have the best title of any to the mercies of God. If remission of sin is not refused to the greatest sinners, how much less reason is there for denying it to infants, who, as they are but newly born, cannot be guilty of any sin, this only excepted that, being descended from Adam, they are guilty of his sin, and liable to punishment!"

A good mother, it is true, smiles at the first cry of her child; yet she feels that something is wanting to fill up the measure of her happiness. She knows that her tender babe is as yet a child of wrath, shut out from heaven by the decree of the Almighty, and without any right to the heavenly inheritance. It is not a "child of wrath," but an angel, that the good mother wishes to press to her heart. She, therefore, has it taken to the church, soon after its birth, to be born again, in baptism, to God and heaven.

I know of a mother, who, about fifty years ago, carried her child three hundred and seventy miles to have it baptized by a priest. How edifying it is when parents have their infants, soon after birth, taken to the church, to be born there again, by baptism, to God and to heaven! But how criminal and cruel are those parents who, through carelessness, put off, or neglect altogether, the baptism of their children!

It is a great crime unjustly to withhold, for a considerable time, a large earthly inheritance from one who is justly entitled to it. Now, is the delaying of the baptism of infants any thing else than the withholding from them the grace of God, their heavenly inheritance? How guilty, then, in the sight of God, must be those who commit such a crime! But far more guilty are those parents, who, by preventing their children from being baptized, rob them of the inheritance of heaven.

To care so little for the baptism of little children is to see, with indifferent eyes, the blood of Jesus Christ trodden under foot; it is to see the image of God lie in the mire of sin, and not care for it; it is to despise the Blessed Trinity: the Father who created them; the Son who redeemed them; the Holy Ghost who desires to sanctify them. What a shame for Christians to be so little concerned about the eternal happiness or loss of these helpless creatures! Just as if it were not true what the fathers of the Church say, that the salvation of one soul is worth more than the whole visible world! Was there ever a time when the price of the souls of little children was lessened? Ah! as long as the price of the blood of Jesus Christ possesses an infinite value, so long the price of souls will remain the same also. Heaven and earth will pass away, but this truth will not. The devil knows and understands it but too well. How he is pleased with those criminal parents, who are called by

Jesus Christ rather "hirelings" than fathers and mothers, "because they have no care for their sheep,"—for the spiritual welfare of their little ones,—"and see the wolf,"—that is, death,—"coming, and leave the sheep and flee." (John x, 12.)

On the day of judgment such parents will be confounded by that poor man of whom we read in the life of St. Francis de Sales, as follows :—

One day, this holy and zealous pastor visited a parish situated on a very high mountain. On reaching the top of the mountain, he felt overwhelmed with fatigue, and his hands and feet were completely benumbed with cold. Whilst he was viewing, with astonishment, the immense ice-blocks of that country, he was told that, some days before, a shepherd, in running after a strayed sheep, fell into one of the frightful precipices of that region; and that his companion, desirous of saving the shepherd's life, or of honoring him with a Christian burial, should he be found dead, was let down into the icy precipice by means of a rope, and drawn up again, pierced through with cold, and holding in his arms his dead companion. On hearing this account, St. Francis turned to his attendants and said : "Some persons imagine that we do too much, and yet we certainly do far less than these poor people. You have heard in what manner one has lost his life in an attempt to find a strayed animal; and how another has exposed himself to the danger of perishing, in order to procure for his friend a Christian burial, which, under these circumstances, might have been omitted. These examples speak to us in forcible language; by this charity we are confounded,—we who perform much less for the salvation of souls intrusted to our care, than those poor people do for the security of animals confided to their charge." Then the holy prelate heaved a deep sigh, saying: "My God, what a beautiful lesson for bishops and pastors! This poor shepherd has sacrificed his life to save a strayed sheep, and I, alas! have so little zeal for the salvation of souls! The least obstacle suffices to deter me, and to make me calculate my every step. Great God, give me true zeal, and the genuine spirit of a good shepherd! Ah, how many shepherds of souls will not this herdsman judge!" Alas! how just and how true is this last remark! Parents are the shepherds of their little ones. If they saw them attacked by a dangerous bodily sickness, they would think of means to save their bodily life. Now they see them very sick in their souls by original sin, and they are less concerned for their spiritual than for their bodily health!

They hear one of their children weeping, and they at once try to console it; they hear a little dog whining at the door, and they open it; they hear a beggar asking for a piece of bread, and they give it; and they hear the spiritual mother of their children, the Catholic Church, cry in lamentable accents, "Let my little ones have the life of grace by baptism," and they do not heed her voice. They hear Jesus Christ cry: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John iii, 5); "Suffer," therefore, "the little ones to come to me" (by baptism), "and forbid them not,"—prevent them not from coming to me by this sacrament, keep them no longer separated from me, by suffering them to live and die in original sin; they hear our Lord say: "Woe to him who scandalizes a little child,"—who keeps it deprived of my grace and friendship, of my eternal glory and happiness; they hear him say: "Woe to you: you yourselves have not entered into union with me, and those that were entering in, you have hindered" (Luke xi, 52); they see our dear Saviour weep over Jerusalem, over the loss of so many little ones who die without baptism, and they hear him say: "Weep not over me, but for your children,"—and neither his voice nor his tears make any impression upon them. They say, with the man in the Gospel: "Trouble me not, the door" (of our heart) "is now shut: I cannot rise and give thee." (Luke xi, 7.) "If an ass," says our Lord, "falls into a pit, you will pull him out even on the Sabbath-day;" and you banish the souls of thousands of little children from my presence by keeping them from baptism! Oh, what great cruelty, what hardness of heart, nay, what great impiety! If they were blind, they would not commit sin; but, as Jesus Christ has spoken so clearly on the necessity of baptism for salvation, they have no excuse for their sin of suffering their children to remain unbaptized forever, or at least for a considerable time.

God has sometimes fearfully punished certain persons who grew up without baptism, and afterward delayed being baptized, although they understood the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation. St. Wulfran converted many Frieslanders from their idolatry to the Catholic faith, by the great miracles which he performed amongst them. One day, two children were cast into the sea, to be drowned in honor of the idols. St. Wulfran rescued them from death by a miracle. When Radbod, the King of Friesland, witnessed this miracle, he promised to become a Christian, and had himself instructed with other catechumens. When he was on the point of being baptized, he asked where the great number of his ancestors and nobles were in the next world. St. Wulfran answered that hell is the portion of all who die guilty of idolatry. At these words the king drew back and refused baptism, saying he would go with the greater number. This tyrant afterward sent for St. Wulfran to treat with him about his conversion, but died before the saint arrived. (Butler's "Lives of the Saints," March 20.)

If God thus punished this king for delaying his baptism, and refusing it when he was prepared to receive it, will the Lord be more merciful to those parents through whose fault so many little ones have died without baptism, and on that account are forever deprived of the beatific vision of God? Oh, fathers and mothers, unworthy of the name, who practise such cruelty toward your little ones! Why did you not die sooner than become such unnatural fathers and mothers? God wishes that the children he gave you should also be his children by baptism, and you despise this blessing by delaying their baptism. What horrible blindness! What unpardonable crime! What frightful murder of the souls of your children!

What, then, is the lot of those who die in original sin without being guilty of actual sin? It is an article of faith that they will never enter heaven and enjoy the beatific vision of God. However, St. Thomas of Aquinas and many other eminent theologians are of opinion that, though these souls will never see God, they will not be tormented in their senses, nor be afflicted because of the privation of the sight of God,—of a happiness which they are incapable of enjoying. As a man, they say, does not feel pain at not being able to fly, so these infants are not afflicted at not being able to enjoy the glory which they were never capable of possessing, either in the order of nature, or in that of grace. They think that these infants, at least after the last judgment, will enjoy a natural beatitude, inasmuch as they will have a natural knowledge and a natural love of God; that they will be placed in a sort of terrestrial paradise; that is to say, these infants will inhabit the earth after it has been renovated, and enjoy the delights of the purified elements. "'Considering the divine goodness,' says St. Alphonsus, 'it appears to me more probable that these souls receive neither reward nor punishment in the other life;' and from this opinion St. Augustine does not dissent." ("Defence of the Council of Trent.")

If God punishes those who deprive infants of the grace of baptism forever, or at least for a considerable time, he, on the other hand, rewards those who take them to baptism as soon as possible; for he is more eager to bestow rewards than to inflict punishments. "Whosoever," says our dear Saviour, "shall give to drink to one of these little ones, even a cup of cold water, shall not lose his reward." (Matt. x, 42.) If Almighty God rewards one for a drink of cold water which he gives to a little child, what reward will he not bestow upon him who gives to a child the kingdom of heaven by means of baptism? No doubt, one of the greatest blessings God can bestow upon a person is the gift of the true faith. Now, there are on record many examples to show that God granted this inestimable gift of faith to non-Catholics who suffer their children to be baptized in the Catholic Church. In 1848, there lived, near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a Protestant family by the name of Pollworth, who were often visited by the Rev. A. Urbanek. After a short time, Mrs. Pollworth joined the Catholic Church; but her husband remained obstinate, and often said that he would never become a Catholic. He consented, however, to have his children baptized. The baptismal ceremonies were performed with the greatest solemnity before High Mass, after which the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. The newly-baptized children stood close to the altar-steps, and their father immediately behind them. Jesus Christ wished to reward him for having permitted his children to be baptized.

During the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, he appeared to Pollworth in the sacred host as the Good Shepherd, with a lamb upon his shoulders. The apparition lasted for about five minutes. On leaving the church, Pollworth asked some of his neighbors whether they had not seen anything singular during the divine service; but when he perceived that they knew nothing of the apparition, he said no more. The next day he invited the priest to pay him a visit, and no sooner had the Rev. Fr. Urbanek entered the house than Pollworth said: "Now, indeed, is the lost sheep found at last, after its long straying among the briers. I wish to become a Catholic." A few days later, he was received into the Church, and, after having made his profession of faith, he solemnly attested by oath the truth of the apparition of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

2. What is baptism?

Baptism is a sacrament which effaces all sin, and remits the punishment due to it; it makes us children of God and of his Church, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

Baptism is a Greek word, which means, *washing, cleansing;* and to baptize means to wash, to cleanse, or to purify, with water. A sacrament, as we have seen, is an outward sign, instituted by Jesus Christ to convey grace to our souls. Now, baptism is such an outward visible sign; for the pouring of water upon the person to be baptized, and the pronouncing of the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," is something that we can perceive by our senses. This outward sign has been instituted by Jesus Christ; for he said to the apostles: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii, 19.) This outward sign gives also grace to the soul; for Jesus Christ has declared that "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." (Mark xvi, 16.) Christ alone could institute this sign; for he alone, as the Lord of grace and nature, can attach to outward signs the power of producing grace in our souls.

"Baptism is a sacrament which effaces all sins." When we were taken to the church after we had been born, the stain of original sin was upon us. Whilst this stain remained, God was displeased with us; for, by this sin, we were "children of wrath." Where, then, was the remedy for this sin? The remedy was baptism; for, by baptism, "original sin" was altogether washed away: we were no longer children of wrath. The priest who baptized us commanded, in the name of Jesus Christ, the evil spirit to depart from us, saying: "Depart, thou filthy spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost!" Then, at the moment when he poured water on our head, and said, "I baptize thee," etc., original sin was blotted out, and the Holy Ghost took possession of our soul. This change of the soul, says a father of the Church, is a new creation, far more wonderful than the first. At the first creation, God spoke: "Let there be light." Instantly, life, light, and beauty, came into existence:—

Drear is the darkness,
Lifeless and shapeless;
Cold lies the hopeless
Region of night!
Lo! the Blest Spirit,
Dovelike, is brooding
O'er the deep waters—
"Let there be light!"
Hark, the Word speaketh:
"Let there be light!"

Light, life, and beauty,
Music and perfume,
Fill now the bright air,
Fill the glad earth.
Hark, the bright angels
Sing now God's praises,
Sing now with gladness,
At earth's new birth!
Heaven rejoices
At earth's new birth!

Shrouded in darkness,
Exiled and joyless,
Mourns in sin's thraldom
Man's hapless child!
Haste to the fountain
Of living waters
Where brooded fondly
God's Spirit mild,
Where heaven opens
O'er man's weak child!

Hark, the Word speaketh!
Darkness now fleeth,
Life, light, and beauty
Fill the glad soul!
Godlike, immortal,
Heir to God's glory,
Soars the pure spirit
To its bright goal;
Soars now exultant
To its bright goal!

The wonderful change brought about in the soul by baptism has sometimes been illustrated by miracles. It is related that, in 1297, the daughter of the King of Armenia was reluctantly given in marriage to Cassanus, King of Tartary, in order to preserve peace between the two kingdoms. As she was endowed with great natural beauty, and with still greater Christian virtues, it was expected that her first-born would resemble her, and give great joy to the king. But the contrary happened. Her first child was quite black, and ugly to behold. This made the king think that the queen was an adulteress, and therefore ordered her and the child to be burned alive. Whatever the virtuous queen said to show that she was innocent, was of no avail with the exasperated king. Seeing that she and her child could not be saved from so cruel a death, she asked of the king, as a last favor, to allow her child to receive baptism before death. The king granted this favor. The child was baptized in presence of the king and of many nobles of his kingdom. No sooner was the child baptized than it lost its ugly color, and became most beautiful like an angel. On beholding this miracle, the king was beside himself; he acknowledged the innocence of the queen, and was very sorry for having sentenced her and her child to the death of fire. He himself was a heathen at the time; but having seen the supernatural power of baptism, he, together with many of his courtiers, embraced Christianity, and propagated the Christian religion in Tartary. (Thomas Bozius, t. i, lib. 11, de Signis Eccl., c. 16.)

The soul of every unbaptized person is far blacker than this child,—so frightfully black and hideous by original sin, that, could we see such a soul, we should die of fright. But oh! if we were to see a soul immediately after baptism, how amazed and confounded should we not be at the sight of it! We would believe it to be an angel. Baptism completely destroyed in that soul the hideousness of original sin, and clothed it with the beauty and lustre of sanctifying grace.

Iron is naturally cold, hard, and dark; but, when heated by a strong fire, it glows with brightness, becomes even white with heat; at the same time, it becomes soft and pliable, and readily takes any form the workman chooses to give it. In like manner, the soul, as it enters this world in original sin, is dark and hideous, cold and lifeless, hard and obstinate in evil. But as soon as God communicates himself to the soul by sanctifying grace in baptism, as soon as that soul is placed in the furnace of God's love, all her dark stains disappear; she becomes holy and just and beautiful, whiter than the falling snow; and warmed with God's love, she becomes pliable to his will, and obedient to his command: "You who have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. iii, 27); that is, by the grace of justification received in baptism, the justice and sanctity of Christ are poured forth into our souls, so that we resemble him, as iron heated with fire resembles fire itself.

Baptism, it is true, was instituted by Jesus Christ to blot out, especially, original sin; but, by this sacrament, actual sins committed before its reception are also forgiven. There is a person of the age of ninety. Let us suppose that, since the time he came to the use of reason, he daily committed the greatest crimes. Now, he receives baptism with the necessary dispositions. At the moment when he is baptized he receives, not only the remission of original sin, but also the remission of all the sins he committed in the course of his life. We are assured of this great truth by the Apostle St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians: "Know you not," he writes, "that neither the fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liers with mankind, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God? And such great sinners some of you were; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified (by baptism) in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi, 10, 11.)

"Ah! yes," exclaims St. John Chrysostom, "though the wickedness of all men should be found in one man alone, if he is plunged into the divine stream of the baptismal water, he thence comes forth purer than the rays of the sun—nay, such a one has become, not merely pure, but also holy and just; for the apostle does not merely say, 'You are washed;' he also says: 'You are sanctified, and you are justified.'" (T. i, Catech. i, ad Illumin., n. 3, p. 270.)

One day, Father Joseph Anchieta met, in Brazil, a man who was covered with leprosy, and on that account was abandoned and despised by every one. He took compassion on him, instructed him, and baptized him. No sooner was he baptized than he was cured, not only of the leprosy of the soul, which is sin, but also of the leprosy of the body. (Life of Father J. Anchieta, chap. vi.) Baptism, it is true, has been instituted, not to dispel the diseases of the body, but the diseases of the soul. Now, if God, in certain instances, cures bodily diseases by the sacrament of baptism, he thereby shows us how powerful this sacrament is to purify the soul from the disease of sin, and to restore to it its true life, which is sanctifying grace.

If a grown person is baptized, no penitential works are imposed upon him. The reason is, because, by baptism, are remitted, not only all his actual sins, but also the punishments due to them, whether in this world or in the next. This full and perfect remission of all his past sins, and of all the punishments due to them, is the effect of the sacrament of baptism, which applies to the soul the merits of Jesus Christ so superabundantly, as to satisfy fully the justice of God for all demands against the sinner, whether for original or actual sin. There is a person. He is guilty of the most heinous crimes. He sincerely repents of them all, he is baptized, and then dies in that happy state. The soul of that person goes straight to heaven, because there is nothing to hinder it from entering that happy abode of the saints.

"Baptism makes us children of God." Before baptism we were "children of wrath." Original sin made us objects of malediction in the sight of God. We were in the power of the devil, and after this life we had nothing but everlasting punishment to expect. But the heavenly Father, who, from all eternity, has begotten his Son, still continues to beget, in time, children, who are, by grace, what the Son of God is by nature; so that our sonship bears the greatest resemblance to his divine Sonship. Hence St. Paul writes: "Whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren." (Rom. viii, 29.)

Now, it is in baptism that we become the children of God. At the very moment that we were baptized, original sin disappeared from our soul, the devil lost his power over us, and the heavenly Father looked down upon us with a loving eye, for we were his children, and the objects of his tenderest love. Behold the great things which divine love effects by baptism! We are the sons of God, as Holy

Scripture says: "Ye are the sons of God." (Osee i, 107.) Yea, even gods, as it were, not only accidentally by grace, but also really by participation in the divine nature.

Men consider it a great honor to have been adopted by some noble family; but our adoption by God is far more honorable. Adopted children receive nothing of the nature of their adoptive father, they inherit only his name and his temporal goods; but, in baptism, we receive from God his grace, and, with his grace, his nature. For this reason, God is called the Father, not only of Christ, but also of us, because, through grace, he communicates to us his nature, which he has communicated to Christ by hypostatic union, thus making us the brethren of his divine Son: "He gave them power," says St. John, "to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name who are born not of blood . . . but of God." (John i, 12.) "Our first nativity," says St. Augustine, "is derived from men; our second, from God and the Church. Behold, they are born of God! Hence it is that he lives in us. Wonderful change! Admirable charity! For your sake, beloved brethren, the Word was made flesh; for your sake, he who is the Son of God has become the Son of man, in order that you, from being the children of men, might become the children of God. For, out of the children of men, he makes the children of God; because, though he was the Son of God, he became the Son of man. Behold, how you partake of the divinity! For the Son of God assumed our human nature, that we might become partakers of his divine nature. By making you participate in his divinity, he has shown you his charity." (Sermo 24, de Tempore, tom. x.)

No earthly honor and happiness can be compared to this honor and happiness of being a child of God. This is the reason why St. Louis, many times, instead of signing himself, "Louis, King of France," simply put, "Louis of Poissy." Being asked why he did so, he answered, that in the little chapel of Poissy he had become a child of God by baptism, and that he deemed this happiness and honor far greater than that of having been made King of France. At the baptismal font the distinction between the rich and the poor disappears; for baptism makes the children of the rich and of the poor all equal in dignity before their heavenly Father. Cleansed and regenerated by the same sacrament, they have an equal right to the same favors; and he who is most faithful to his baptismal engagements, is the greatest in the eyes of God. This is the lesson which the Dauphin, father of Louis XVI, one day inculcated on his children. Two of his sons had received only private baptism at the time of their birth. At the age of seven or eight the sacred ceremonies were supplied. The prince, their father, called for the baptismal parochial registry, in which their names were inserted. On opening the register, he pointed out to them the name which immediately preceded theirs—it was the son of a very poor man. "You see, children," remarked the father, "in the eyes of God, all ranks and conditions are equal. He allows no distinction except that made by religion and virtue. One day you will be distinguished and powerful in the eyes of the world, and this poor boy will not even be known; but, if he prove more virtuous than you, he will be greater and more illustrious in the eyes of God."

"Baptism makes us children of Christ's Church." We ceased to be infidels as soon as we were baptized. By baptism God brought us into the fold of his Church, as he brought our first parents into the terrestrial paradise; and this membership entitles us to the spiritual goods of the Church. "Everything is yours," said the Lord to us, when conducting us into this new Eden, his Church,—the masterpiece of his power, wisdom, and love: "Yes, my Church is yours; enjoy the splendor of her mysteries, her awful truths, the fruitfulness of her doctrine, and the living waters of her sacraments. For you, is the heavenly bread of my Word; for you, the august sacrifice of the Mass; for you, the prayers and the good works of the faithful; for you, the patronage of the saints; for you, the strengthening banquet of the holy table, that food for which the angels sigh. Verily, I, the Lord your God,—I give you all those riches, I lay open to you all those treasures, I have created all those wonders for you. Be faithful to me until your happiness is completed in the Church triumphant."

Persons, however, who are not baptized, can have no part in the spiritual goods of the Church, nor can they validly receive any of the other sacraments. As they are no Christians, they are not incorporated into Christ. It is by baptism that we are united to Christ: "As many of you," says St. Paul, "as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." (Gal. iii, 27.) From this incorporation into Christ are derived that great readiness and facility of baptized persons to believe and do all that Jesus Christ teaches us through his Church; whilst the contrary is noticed in those who do not enjoy the graces of baptism.

St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr, when yet very young, consecrated her virginity to Jesus Christ. However, she was compelled by her parents to marry a nobleman named Valerian. Thereupon, her guardian angel appeared to her, and told her that he would assist her, and that Valerian would not offend her. With this assurance, she consented to the marriage. After the celebration of this ceremony, St. Cecilia said to Valerian: "Know, Valerian, that I am a Christian. From my childhood I have consecrated my virginity to God. He has appointed an angel from heaven to protect me against every insult. Beware, therefore, of doing anything to me by which you may excite the wrath of the Lord." Upon hearing this, Valerian was afraid to touch her, and said that he, too, would believe in Jesus Christ, if he were only allowed to see her angel. Cecilia told him that he could not expect such a favor without being baptized. Valerian, being inflamed with the desire of seeing the angel, said that he was willing to comply with this condition. Hereupon, Cecilia directed him to St. Urban, who, on account of the persecution, was concealed in the catacombs. Valerian received the necessary instruction, and was baptized by that holy pope. As his soul was now quite pure and holy like an angel, it was his privilege to see an angel. On his return home he found St. Cecilia, who was in prayer, accompanied by the angel, and surrounded with rays of heavenly splendor. ("Victories of the Martyrs," by St. Alphonsus.)

It is worthy of notice that Valerian saw, after baptism, the angel whom, before baptism, he could not see. In like mannner, a person, after baptism, easily sees and believes the truth of Christ's doctrine, when it is proposed to him by his Church, whilst the contrary is noticed in an unbaptized person.

"In one way, therefore," says St. John Chrysostom, "do I feel disposed, and in a different way an unbeliever, as regards the truths and mysteries of our religion. I hear that Christ was crucified, and at once I am lost in wonder at this mercy. The unbeliever hears, and accounts it weakness. He hears of a laver, and accounts it merely water, whilst I do not merely regard what is seen, but that cleansing of the soul which is by the Spirit. The unbeliever accounts that my body alone has been washed. But I have believed also that the soul has become both pure and holy, and I esteem it the sepulchre, the resurrection, the sanctification, the justice, the full redemption, the adoption, the inheritance, the kingdom of heaven, the bestowal of the Holy Ghost. For, not by sight do I judge the things that appear, but by the eyes of the mind, enlightened by the light of faith. I hear Christ say: 'This is my body.' In one way do I understand what is said; in a different way, the unbeliever." (T. x, Hom. vii, in Epist. ad Cor., n. i, p. 58.)

As the light of the sun shines on the eyes of the infant, without any labor and effort on his part, and causes him to see his parents with joy, and directs safely his first steps in life; so the light of Catholic faith shines brightly before the mind of the baptized person, and causes the lustre of its supreme authority to appear, and obtains his complete assent to the laws of faith and morality. In this light the young Christian knows that it is his duty to give his heart to God, to restrain his passions, and to endeavor to become a perfect Christian.

"Baptism makes us heirs to the kingdom of heaven." From the very moment we were baptized we became the brethren and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ. We acquired an undisputed title to the kingdom of heaven, being called to reign forever in that happy abode of the blessed, and to share in the glories of our heavenly Father: "If we are the children of God," says St. Paul, "we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs of Christ." (Rom. viii, 15.)

M. Boudon, who was Archdeacon of Evreux, in the time of Louis XIV, relates a very touching story on this subject. A new church was building in a town of that diocese, and each one gave what he could to promote this pious object. A poor old woman, who was reduced almost to beggary, came one day to the sacristy to the priest, who was receiving the offerings, and gave him three francs. "How, my good woman, you want to give me money? Why it seems to me that I ought rather to offer you some, for I see by your clothing that you are very poor!" "I poor, reverend father? Why, am I not a Christian, and, consequently, daughter of a great king and heiress of a great kingdom? Have no fears for me, then, for I shall always be able to earn a living for myself; and I hope our dear Lord will one day receive me into his eternal kingdom."

What this pious poor woman said, every good Christian will say when he reflects on the wonderful change which his soul has undergone by means of baptism. By this sacrament the soul becomes purer than silver, and brighter than the finest gold. It is more lovely and more radiant, more sublime and more ravishing, than anything in nature. Go to the summit of a mountain which is from eight to ten thousand feet above the level of the ocean. It is midsummer. The air is warm and bland. The heavens are blue and cloudless. Behold the mountain peaks, how they shoot forth one behind the other as far as the eye can reach! How beautiful, how sublime, is the spectacle that now stretches out before you! The rosy light of the setting sun is reflected again and again from a thousand glowing peaks. You seem to stand on the shore of a vast waving sea of fire. Now raise your eyes from the darkening earth. Look up to the heavens. See how the myriad stars gleam so solemnly and silently. Their pure and holy light knows nought of the sins and miseries of this earth. They speak to you, in their own gentle way, of the purity, the holiness, and the beauty, of God. Ah! bring together all that is beautiful in nature, and then remember that a soul in the state of grace is more beautiful than all the beauties of nature. How beautiful is the sweet light of morning, how beautiful are the varied tints of the rainbow! But that soul is far more beautiful. The dazzling beams of the noonday sun are bright, indeed, but the light of grace that beams from that innocent soul is far brighter. The spring-lily and the fresh-fallen snow look white and pure, but the purity of the newly-baptized soul is far whiter; for it is white with the purity of sanctifying grace. There is a sublime and awful beauty in the rolling thunder, and in the vivid lightning, as it flashes through the dark clouds; but there is something far more sublime and awful in the beauty of that innocent soul. There is in it a majesty, on which even the angels gaze with fear and delight. So marvellously beautiful is that holy soul, that, could we but gaze on it, we should die of joy; for that soul is the living image and likeness of God, it is the temple of the Holy Ghost, to whom it is most intimately united; and this union elevates it far above itself, and, as it were, deifies it. "The charity of God," says St. Paul, "is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given us." (Rom. v, 5.)

We read in the life of Sister Mary Oignies, that one day she was present at the baptism of a child. Now, at the very moment the child was baptized, she saw a demon go out of it, and the Holy Ghost, surrounded by angels, enter it. By thus communicating himself to the soul, the

Holy Ghost raises it, as it were, to a level with himself, transforming it into himself, and making it, as it were, divine.

There are very few who know the greatness of the numberless blessings of baptism, as it has been explained. The holy apostles and the fathers of the Church never ceased to inculate the greatness of these blessings upon the hearts of the Christians: "Behold," exclaims St. John the Apostle, "what manner of charity the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be, the sons of God! Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God. . . . We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is." "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body." (1 Cor. vi, 19, 20.)

"If, after the regeneration of the baptismal pool," says St. Hippolytus, "man becomes a god through water and the Holy Ghost, he will also be a joint-heir of Christ after the resurrection from the dead. Therefore do I, as a herald, proclaim: Come, all ye families of the Gentiles, to the immortality of this baptism. I announce to you, who abide in the darkness of ignorance, the glad tidings of life. Come out of the slavery unto liberty; out of tyranny into a kingdom; from corruption into incorruption." (Hom. in Theoph. Galland., t. ii, p. 494.) "Ah, yes!" writes St. Hilary, "you have done well to praise baptism; for, who amongst the faithful does not know that baptism is the life of virtues, the death of crimes, an immortal nativity, the acquisition of the heavenly kingdom, the harbor of innocence, the shipwreck of sins?" (De Schism. Donat., l. v, n. 1.) "Indeed," says St. John Chrysostom, "before baptism, we were captives; after baptism, we enjoy the pure light of liberty. Before baptism, we were strangers and wanderers; after baptism, we have the rights of citizens in the Church. Before baptism, we were in the confusion of sin; after baptism, we are in the happy condition of the just. We are not only free, but pure; not only pure, but just; not only just, but sons; not only sons, but heirs; not only heirs, but brothers and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ; not only his joint-heirs, but his members; not only his members, but his temple; not only his temple, but the organs of his spirit. See what we owe to baptism!" (Hom. ad Neophytos, in append. ad tom. iii.)

Oh! how happy the Church felt at the moment of our baptism! How the tender spouse of Jesus looked upon us with affection and love! We were no longer children of wrath. We had just passed from the state of sin to the state of grace. The Holy Ghost had taken up his dwelling in our hearts. We had become members of our dear Saviour. God called us his beloved sons, and we called him by the endearing name of father, and Jesus our brother! We were inscribed in the book of life. An angel descended from heaven in order to take us under his care and protection. Oh! had we died then, what would be our happiness now! O my God! is not this desire very just? The white robe which we wore that day was so immaculate and so beautiful!

Although baptism removes from our soul everything that can be displeasing to Almighty God, and fills us with unspeakable blessings, yet it does not destroy in us concupiscence; that is, our natural inclination to evil, which we have inherited from our first parents. Every one of us has, from his childhood, experienced this inclination to evil. We naturally feel more inclined to disobedience than to submission; we are more prone to hatred than to love; more inclined to gratify the evil desires of our hearts than to practise the holy virtue of chastity; we generally are more ready to read a bad or useless book than one which is edifying and instructive. We are more apt to listen to uncharitable and unbecoming conversations than to the word of God. We feel naturally more inclined to vainglory, pride, and levity, than to humility, self-contempt, and the spirit of mortification: "I do not that good which I will," says St. Paul; "but the evil which I hate, I do." (Rom. vii, 15.) The great apostle means to say: I do not wish to do evil, I even try to avoid it; but I experience within myself a continual inclination to evil. I endeavor to do good, but I feel within myself a great reluctance thereto, and I have to do violence to myself in order to act aright.

But this inclination to evil is no sin in itself; it is only the effect of sin. God is pleased not to take away this evil inclination by the grace of baptism, but to leave it in us, to humble our pride by the daily experience of our own weakness, to detach our hearts from this world,—from so foul and abominable a body composed of "the concupiscence of the flesh, of the eyes, and of the pride of life." God leaves this evil inclination in us, to make us consider this world as a place of punishment in which we are exposed to so many afflictions from the infirmities of our nature; to make us long after heaven, where alone we shall be delivered from all our miseries; to try our fidelity and exercise our virtue in fighting against our evil inclination, in order that, by resisting it, we may increase our merits for heaven.

Our inclination to evil, then, if manfully resisted, cannot injure us, but rather adds jewels to the crown of glory reserved for us in heaven. Such is God's goodness toward us, that the very evil effects of sin may be turned into a source of great merits and rewards. We have to endure the evils of this life, because we, as the members of Christ, are not to be more honored than our Head and King. He entered into the glory of his immortal life by the most cruel torments and a most ignominious death. Who, then, shall wonder if the faithful, even after they have received the grace of justification by baptism, are still clothed with a frail and perishable body, in which they must undergo, for Christ's sake, the various trials and crosses of this world, in order that, "suffering with Christ, they shall also reign with him"? (2 Tim. ii, 12.) Therefore, neither concupiscence, nor the temporal ills of this life, are to be looked upon in baptized persons as punishments for sin committed before baptism, but rather as means to greater sanctification and glory. In the continual war, however, which we have to wage against our evil inclinations to the end of our life, baptism is of great advantage to us; for, by the sacramental grace peculiar to it, the violence of this enemy is greatly restrained, the ardor of our passions is moderated, and abundant assistance is given, to enable us to overcome them.

3. How must adults prepare themselves for baptism?

1, *They must know and believe the principal truths of faith;* 2, *be really sorry for their sins;* 3, *purpose to live up to the teachings of the Church; and,* 4, *wish to be baptized.*

1. Our dear Lord instructed his apostles not to baptize adults, or grown persons, before they sufficiently knew the

principal truths of religion, and believed those truths. "Going, therefore," he said to them, "teach all nations;" and then, "baptize them." (Matt. xxviii, 19.) "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." (Mark xvi, 16.) This instruction of our Lord was faithfully carried out by the apostles, as we are told by St. Luke.

One day the Deacon St. Philip was quietly reposing in his house, when God spoke to him, and said: "Arise quickly, and go toward the South, to the desert way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza." St. Philip arose and set out. Soon he perceives a fine chariot, in which was a blackamoor, who was one of the principal officers of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. He was returning from adoring God in Jerusalem, and reading the book of the Prophet Isaias. Philip accosts him as he sits in the chariot, and asks him if he understands what he reads. "How can I," said he, "unless some one show me?" He had happened on the passage where Isaias says, speaking of our Lord: "As a sheep he was led to the slaughter: and like a lamb without a voice before a shearer, so opened he not his mouth." The holy deacon took occasion, then, to speak to him of Jesus Christ, made him observe that those prophecies related to his passion, and finally gave him a brief explanation of our holy religion. The chariot was still going on; they soon came to a fountain. The officer asked what hindered him from being baptized; and St. Philip, finding him sufficiently instructed to receive baptism, answered: "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayst. And he answering said: I believe," etc., whereupon Philip baptized him. The officer went out of the water regenerated by the new sacrament he had received, and went his way rejoicing. (Acts viii.)

2. It is, however, not enough for grown persons to know and believe the principal truths of religion; they must also be really sorry for their sins. Almighty God cannot forgive the sins of those who are not sorry for them: for, not to be sorry for our sins is to love them; and a will that loves sin is diametrically opposed to the will of God, and cannot be forgiven until, by sorrow, it ceases to be opposed to God. However, it is not necessary that this sorrow should amount to contrition, or perfect sorrow; attrition, or imperfect sorrow, is sufficient as a preparation for receiving the grace of baptism.

There is a great sinner. He is overwhelmed by shame. He considers the hideousness of his sin. He estimates the punishments awaiting it hereafter, from the horror with which it will be regarded on the day of judgment, even by those who themselves are sinners. He learns the enormity of its guilt, and detests it as the offence against God, and flees, confounded, to the feet of Jesus Christ in the person of his priest, to obtain the pardon of his offended God. He may be banished and disowned by his earthly parents, he may be denied the fond pleasure of a mother's smile, yet he will be graciously received by his heavenly Father, who has promised forgiveness to every repenting sinner. His love for God may not as yet be so pure as that of the Magdalen, the penitent of the Gospel, when washing the feet of Jesus with her tears. He is struck with terror at the vengeance which he has provoked. He dares not raise his impure eyes to heaven, but he fixes them on the flames of hell, where impure souls are tormented forever in proportion to their former shameful pleasures. Penitent, detesting sin, resolved rather to suffer any excruciating torments than again commit sin, humbly receiving shame and all temporal afflictions as its just punishment, he cries, disconsolate and wretched: "O God! be merciful to me a sinner! Wilt not thou, Lord, have pity on me?" It is to such a one, even with this sorrow, that the sacrament of baptism also avails unto justification; for this sacrament possesses a heavenly efficacy; its waters wash the soul from sin by virtue of the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all iniquity.

3. True sorrow for sin presupposes a firm purpose of living up to the teachings of the Church. To commit sin is to act in opposition to the teachings of the Church; and, therefore, to be sorry for sin is to detest such manner of acting, and to purpose to lead a life conformable to the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ. "Teach those" (whom you prepare for baptism), said our Lord, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii, 20.) The firm purpose, then, to live up to the doctrine of the Church is also absolutely necessary as a preparation of receiving the grace of baptism.

4. The person to be baptized must also have the intention of receiving baptism. God puts before us life and death, heaven and hell, to choose one or the other. He does not wish to force everlasting life upon any one. Hence, the Catholic Church baptizes no one who, having reached a responsible age, does not of himself desire to be baptized, as such a person cannot receive the sacrament even *validly*. But, should a grown person have the intention of receiving baptism, but not have the necessary disposition of faith, hope, and true sorrow for sin, he would, indeed, receive the sacrament *validly*,—that is, he would receive the character of a Christian,—but not the other effects of the sacrament, as the infusion of sanctifying grace, the remission of original

sin, and of all actual sins. These salutary effects would remain suspended until such a person truly repents of his sins. Persons, then, who have reached a responsible age, must prepare themselves for the worthy reception of baptism. Infants, of course, can make no preparation, nor is any required from them. They are, however, always capable of being lawfully baptized; for they cannot, by actual sin, hinder the grace of the sacrament, and the Church supplies the necessary intention.

As the natural life is given to the child without its coöperation, so is the supernatural life also given without its coöperation; and as original sin is communicated to the child without any fault or act on its part, so is baptism, which takes away sin, given to the child without any merit or act on its part.

4. How is baptism given?

By pouring water on the head of the person to be baptized, saying, at the same time: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (*Matt. xxviii*, 19.)

In order to baptize validly, it is absolutely necessary to express: 1, the action of baptizing, or washing, by the minister, in the words, "I baptize;" 2, the person being baptized, by the word, "thee;" 3, the united authority of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, by the words, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" for, as baptism has its virtue or force from the Father who sent his Son; from the Son who instituted it, and by his blood gave it virtue to blot out sins; and from the Holy Ghost who inwardly purifies and sanctifies souls,—Christ wished that the three divine persons of the Blessed Trinity should be distinctly named in the form of baptism.

Now, the water may be applied in three ways: 1, by *immersion*,—that is, the person to be baptized may be dipped in the water; 2, by *infusion*,—that is, the water may be poured on the person; 3, by *aspersion*,—that is, the person may be sprinkled with the water. Any of these ways of baptizing is valid; but that, by pouring the water on the person, is the one for the most part ordered in the Roman Ritual. He, then, who is on the point of baptizing a person, should pour the water on the head, if he possibly can, in such a way that it may flow over and wet the skin. But if he cannot pour the water on the head, he should pour it upon the breast, arm, foot, or some other naked part of the body, and, whilst he is pouring the water on the head, he is at the same time to say distinctly: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And let it be remembered that the person who pours the water should also be the person to pronounce the words, or form of baptism; for, if one person pours the water, and another pronounces the words, no baptism is given.

When an infant is to be baptized, and it is doubtful whether it is alive, baptism should be given conditionally, by saying: "If thou art living, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" for it is better for a person to expose himself to the danger of baptizing a dead child than not to baptize one living.

It should also be remembered that, if the set form of words of baptism is not said properly, no baptism is given. If, for instance, a person, whilst pouring the water, should only say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," no baptism is given, because the words, "I baptize thee," are left out.

There are also many theologians who think that no baptism is given when he, who baptizes, first finishes the pouring of the water on the person, and then only pronounces the words, "I baptize thee," etc., or first finishes pronouncing the words, "I baptize thee," etc., and then only pours the water on the person. The union, therefore, between the application of the matter and the pronouncing of the form, should be such that, according to the moral estimation of men, the words may be considered as affecting the matter, and as constituting with it *one whole sign.* Every one, therefore, who is baptizing, should be very careful to pronounce *all the words* of the form of baptism, *while pouring the water* on the person, in order to make sure of giving a sacrament so necessary for salvation.

5. Who are appointed by Christ to administer baptism?

The pastors of his Church; but, in case of necessity, any person may baptize.

As Christ did not wish to stay always with us on earth, he appointed the "pastors of his Church," that is, the Catholic bishops and priests, to take his place, and be for him the ministers of the sacraments. "Let a man," says St. Paul, "so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God," that is, of the sacraments. (1 Cor. iv, 1.) Let it be remembered here that Christ instituted the sacraments as infallible means of conveying grace to our souls. Hence, the efficacy or the graces of the sacraments do not depend at all on the ministers of them. The sacraments have their efficacy entirely from Christ and his merits. Hence, whether the minister of a sacrament be virtuous or wicked, it produces the same effects in the worthy receiver. "The sacraments," says St.

Augustine, "are not more true and more holy if they are administered by one who is better, for they of themselves are true and holy; just as it makes no matter as to the efficacy of the seed and plantation, whether or not that be done with clean or foul hands, so that the seed be good, and the earth fruitful. In like manner, it matters not as to their fruits whether the sacraments are administered by a wicked minister, or by one who is pious and good, provided that he administers them duly." (Contra Donat., c. iv.) As a piece of gold does not increase in value in the hand of a pious person, nor lose in value in that of a wicked man; so, in like manner, the sacraments do not increase in efficacy in the hands of a holy minister, nor lose any of their efficacy in the hands of a wicked one. All that is necessary in the minister for conferring the sacraments *validly* is: 1, to have the *power* of administering them; 2, to have *jurisdiction* with regard to those sacraments which require it; 3, to perform all the essential rites; and, 4, to have the *intention* of at least doing what the Church does. (Conc. Trid., Sess. vii, Can. 11 et 12.)

Although it be true that Christ appointed the pastors of his Church as the ministers of the sacraments, yet, as to baptism, an exception is made in cases of necessity. For, as baptism is so necessary for salvation, Jesus Christ, in instituting it, has given to men every facility for receiving it. Hence baptism can, nay, even should, be administered, in case of necessity, by any person, lay or clerical, man or woman, Christian or infidel, rather than that any one should die without baptism. Consequently, all persons, especially married women, should know how to baptize validly. In cases of necessity, the following order should be observed: A woman should not baptize if a man is at hand who understands how to baptize; nor a layman if a cleric, nor a heretic if a Catholic, may be had. When baptism is to be given by a layman in case of necessity, it is best to choose the person who best understands how to perform the ceremony of baptism. Except in case of necessity, a lay person should never give baptism; for, in usurping a function which does not belong to him, he becomes guilty of a serious offence. The baptism, however, given by him, is valid, and cannot be repeated. Although a lay person may baptize in case of necessity, yet he can never administer baptism *solemnly;* that is, with the ceremonies accompanying baptism, such as the exorcisms, the anointing with sacred oil, the attendance of godfather and godmother. The right of baptizing solemnly belongs exclusively to a Catholic bishop or priest, or to a deacon duly commissioned for the purpose.

6. Is it necessary to use holy water in baptism?

No; any natural water will do.

For the administration of solemn baptism the Church has prescribed that water, consecrated with a peculiar rite and with holy oils, is to be used. But for private baptism, that is, when baptism is to be given in case of necessity, any natural water, properly so called, may be used, such as rain-water, or water which is taken from a well, or a fountain, or a river, or a pond, or the sea. For, if the matter be changed in substance, or be mixed with other matter, so that it is no longer, in common estimation, the same that was ordained by Christ for the sacrament, there is no sacrament. Hence, in baptism, there is no sacrament, if wine, or any other liquid than water, be used. And be it remembered that the natural water used for private baptism need not be blessed. There was a certain father who did not know this. He was under the impression that holy water was required for private baptism; and, not having any in his house, he let his sick babe die without baptism. Thus many infants are lost forever, because their parents do not know what is required to baptize validly.

7. What intention must he have who baptizes?

He must have the intention to baptize; that is, to do what Christ has ordained.

There is no baptism, if he who baptizes does not intend to do what the Church does, or what Christ has ordained. If, for instance, the ceremony of baptism be performed simply with the intention of instructing the bystanders how to give baptism, there is no sacrament. Whenever there is a reasonable doubt as to whether a person is validly baptized, either for want of a proper intention in the minister, or of the right matter and form, baptism is conferred again, but only conditionally. Such a reasonable doubt is justly entertained as to the validity of baptism of a large number of Protestants; for many of their ministers are complete infidels, and therefore do not care for the valid administration of baptism. Hence it is customary to confer baptism again, conditionally, on those Protestants who embrace the Catholic faith.

8. Can the baptism of water be ever supplied?

When a person cannot receive the baptism of water, it may be supplied by the baptism of desire, or by the baptism of blood.

Almighty God is goodness itself. Hence he wishes that all men should be saved. But, in order to be saved, it is necessary to pass, by means of baptism, from the state of sin to the state of grace. Infants, therefore, who die unbaptized, can never enter the kingdom of heaven. The case of grown persons is somewhat different; for, when grown persons cannot be actually baptized before death, then the baptism of water may be supplied by what is called the *baptism of desire.*

There is an infidel. He has become acquainted with the true faith. He most earnestly desires baptism. But he cannot have any one to baptize him before he dies. Now, is such a person lost because he dies without the baptism of water? No; in this case, the person is said to be baptized in *desire.*

9. What is the baptism of desire?

An earnest wish to receive baptism, or to do all that God requires of us for our salvation, together with a perfect contrition, or a perfect love of God.

An ardent desire of baptism, accompanied with faith in Jesus Christ and true repentance, is, with God, like the baptism of water. In this case, the words of the Blessed Virgin are verified: "The Lord has filled the hungry with good things." (Luke i, 35.) He bestows the good things of heaven upon those who die with the desire of baptism. We read of a very interesting instance, in confirmation of this truth, in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.* It is related by M. Odin, missionary apostolic, and, subsequently, Archbishop of New Orleans, Louisiana: "At some distance from our establishment at Barrens," he says, "in Missouri, United States of America, there was a district inhabited by Protestants or infidels, with the exception of three or four Catholic families. In 1834 we had the consolation of baptizing several persons there: thus it was that the Lord was pleased to reward the kindness with which one of the most respectable inhabitants gave us hospitality every time we journeyed that way. This worthy man, who was not a Catholic, had three little children, who received with eagerness the instructions we never failed to give them. The tallest of the sons, only eight years old, especially showed such a particular relish for the word of God, that he learned by heart the entire catechism. Evening and morning he addressed his little prayer to the good God; and if ever his little sister missed that holy exercise, he reproached her very seriously. Things were at this point when the cholera broke out in the neighborhood. Then this good little boy said simply to his mother: 'Mamma, the cholera is coming here: oh! how glad I should be if the priests from the seminary came to baptize me! That cruel disease will attack me, I am sure it will, and I shall die without baptism; then you will be sorry.' Alas! the poor child predicted truly: he was one of the first victims of the dreadful plague. During the short moments of his cruel sufferings he incessantly asked for baptism, and even with his last sigh he kept repeating: 'Oh! if any one would baptize me! My God! must I die without being baptized?' The mother, thinking that she could not herself administer that sacrament, although there was evident necessity, was in the greatest trouble; neither would the child consent to receive it from the hands of a Protestant minister. At last he died without having obtained his ardent wish. As soon as I heard of the cholera being in that part of the country, I hastened thither; but I only reached there some hours after the child's funeral. The family was plunged in the greatest affliction. I consoled them as much as I could, and especially in relation to the eternal destiny of their poor little one, by explaining to them what the Church teaches us on the baptism of desire. This consoling doctrine much assuaged their grief; after giving the other necessary instructions, I baptized the mother and the two young children, and, some days after, the father failed not to follow the example of his family." ("Catholic Anecdotes," p. 547.)

Although it be true that the fathers of the Church have believed and taught that the baptism of desire may supply the baptism of water, yet this doctrine, as St. Augustine observes, should not make any one delay ordinary baptism when he is able to receive it; for, such a delay of baptism is always attended with great danger of salvation.

10. What is the baptism of blood?

Martyrdom for the sake of Christ.

There is still another case in which a person may be justified and saved without having actually received the sacrament of baptism, viz.: the case of a person suffering martyrdom for the faith before he has been able to receive baptism. Martyrdom for the true faith has always been held by the Church to supply the sacrament of baptism. Hence, in the case of martyrdom, a person has always been said to be baptized in his own blood. Our divine Saviour assures us that "whosoever shall lose his life for his sake and the gospel, shall save it." (Mark viii, 35.) He, therefore, who dies for Jesus Christ, and for the sake of his religion, obtains a full remission of all his sins, and is immediately after death admitted into heaven.

St. Emerentiana, while preparing to receive baptism, went to pray at the tomb of St. Agnes. While praying there, she was stoned to death by the heathens. Her parents were greatly afflicted, and almost inconsolable, when they learned that their daughter had died without having received baptism. To console her parents, God permitted Emerentiana to appear to them in her heavenly glory, and to tell them not to be any longer afflicted on account of her salvation, "for," said she, "I am in heaven with Jesus, my dear Saviour, whom I loved with my whole heart, when living on earth." (Her Life, 23d Jan.)

St. Genesius of Arles is also honored as a saint, because, for refusing to subscribe to a persecuting edict of Maximilian, he was put to death, though, at that time, he had not been baptized.

11. Who can be godfather or godmother in baptism?

Only a good practical Catholic should be taken as sponsor.

"Every one," says the catechism of the Council of Trent, "after he has been born, requires a nurse and instructor, by whose assistance and attention he may be brought up and instructed in learning and useful knowledge. So, also, it is necessary that those, who, by the waters of baptism, begin to live a spiritual life, should be consigned to the fidelity and prudence of some one from whom they may learn the precepts of the Christian religion, and by whom they may be instructed in every manner of Christian piety, and thus gradually grow up in Christ, until, with the Lord's help, they at length arrive at perfect manhood." Among the assistants at baptism, then, are to be reckoned sponsors, or godfathers and godmothers. They are persons who present the child to the Church for baptism, answer and promise in its name. This custom of appointing godfathers and godmothers appears to have come down to us from the time of the apostles; "Our divine masters" (the apostles), says St. Dionysius, "have judged it meet that there should be persons selected to present children to be baptized. They become spiritual fathers to those whom they hold at the font of salvation, and guides to direct them during life." The office of sponsors is to present to the Church those who are to be baptized, to hold them at the baptismal font, to answer and promise in their name, and to be sureties for the performance of the baptismal engagements. Hence it is evident that only Catholics, and especially those Catholics who themselves are sufficiently instructed, lead a truly Christian life, and are, at least, Easter communicants, should be taken as sponsors; otherwise they should not be admitted as sponsors.

12. How many godfathers and godmothers does the Church admit?

The Church generally admits one godfather for a boy, and one godmother for a girl.

The Church has limited the number of sponsors to one godfather for a boy, or to one godmother for a girl; or, at most, to both a godfather and a godmother. If other persons are admitted, they are to be considered only as witnesses of the child's baptism, and, therefore, contract no spiritual relationship. It is to be remembered that the person who baptizes, and the sponsors, contract a spiritual affinity with the child and its parents, so that between them no marriage can be lawfully or validly contracted without a dispensation.

13. What are the obligations of a sponsor toward the child?

To take care that the child be well instructed in the Catholic religion, if the parents should neglect or be unable to perform this duty.

Godfathers and godmothers become, as it were, the sureties for their godchildren. Hence they are obliged to instruct them, or at least to see that they are instructed in religion when they come to the use of reason. "But they are not obliged," says St. Alphonsus, "to give religious instruction in Catholic countries, where parish priests are diligent in the discharge of their duty." Speaking of this duty of sponsors, St. Augustine comprises in a few words the lessons of religion which they are bound to teach their godchildren: "They ought," he says, "to admonish them to observe chastity, love justice, cherish charity; and, above all, they should teach them the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the rudiments of the Christian religion." (Cat. Conc. Trent.) But, alas! the duties of sponsors are often neglected; for, says the catechism of the Council of Trent, "such is the negligence with which the office of sponsor is treated in the Church that its name only remains, whilst few, if any, have the least idea of its sanctity. Let all sponsors, then, always remember that they are strictly obliged to exercise a constant vigilance over their spiritual children, and to instruct them carefully in the maxims of a Christian life; that they may approve themselves through life such as their sponsors promised they should be, by the solemn ceremony of becoming sponsors." St. Augustine also says: "I admonish you, men and women, who have become sponsors, to consider that you stood as sureties before God for those whose sponsors you have undertaken to become. Indeed, it is the paramount duty of every man who undertakes any office, to be indefatigable in the discharge of the duties which it imposes; and he who solemnly professed to be the teacher and guardian of another, should not abandon to destitution him whom he once received under his care and protection, as long as he should have occasion for either."

St. Alphonsus was sponsor to the three children of his brother Hercules. This office made him exact in seeing that they received a thorough Catholic education. He frequently wrote to urge his brother to attend to the education of his children. He even composed a rule of life for them, and desired to be informed as to their progress in virtue and learning. "For the love of God," he wrote to his brother, "often call to mind the business of your eternal salvation, as I have frequently begged you to do. I am pleased to hear that my little godchildren practise the devotions which I have recommended for them. I hope they will be inclined to become saints." The saint took great interest in the progress of these children. He explained to them their duties toward God and their parents, the hideousness of sin, and how deeply bad conduct dishonors a Christian and a gentleman. Above all, he endeavored to inspire them with a tender devotion to Jesus and Mary. (Life, ch. 54.)

14. When does the Church require a sponsor in baptism?

When baptism is administered by the priest with the sacred ceremonies of the Church.

From the fact that the Church requires a sponsor whenever baptism is solemnly administered by the priest, many are led to think that no person can be baptized, not even in case of necessity, without having a sponsor. Hence it may happen that many a sick child dies before the sponsor arrives. It should then be borne in mind that neither a godfather nor a godmother is required for private baptism; and should a sponsor have been appointed and assist at the private baptism, he contracts no spiritual relationship with the child or with its parents; for, according to the appointment of the Church, such a spiritual affinity is contracted only in solemn baptism.

15. What are sacred ceremonies?

Sacred ceremonies are certain visible signs or actions, expressing something holy and divine.

A ceremony or rite, in its general acceptation, is an outward action or sign used for promoting a becoming decorum in society, or for testifying to our fellow-men the love and affection of our hearts, or for reminding us of such truths as do not fall under the senses. Thus, in all courts of justice, there are certain outward forms and ceremonies observed as necessary for carrying on, in regular order, such business as is done there. In ordinary life itself, the outward actions of bowing and uncovering the head to one another are ceremonies by which we testify our regard and esteem for our fellow-men; and the very rules of good breeding in company are but so many ceremonies and rites by which we express our respect for one another, and carry on the intercourse of life with proper decency and decorum. Indeed, the ordinary duties of society, whether civil or religious, cannot be discharged without the observance of external rites or ceremonies. Now, in religion, certain ceremonies or rites are just as natural and necessary as in good society. "Men cannot," says St. Augustine, "be collected in any name of religion, unless the bond of certain signs, as if of visible sacraments, should unite them together" (Contr. Faustum, lib. xix, c. xi); from which Duns Scotus infers that, even under the law of nature, there must have been ceremonies divinely instituted (in lib. iv, Lent. Dist. i, 9, 7) : for, though they are nothing in themselves, they are yet acts of religion exteriorly manifested, by which the mind is excited to veneration of holy things, and elevated to heavenly objects; and by them piety is nourished, charity enkindled, faith increased, the worship of God is adorned, and religion maintained. The simple are thus instructed, and the true faithful kept distinct from false Christians.

The body should pay its homage as well as the soul. External homage is the natural and necessary appendix to internal worship; for we are so constituted by nature, that all the sentiments of our soul show themselves in the exterior, and become painted in the demeanor of the whole body; so much so, that it is scarcely possible to love God sincerely with all the heart, and not break forth in his praise, and manifest the interior sense of divine charity by external signs.

Why do men love ceremony in religion? Because they wish to enjoy life in all the faculties of their nature. To live is to be happy; and the highest life is that which is spiritual and divine. Therefore we desire that in this life all our perceptions should participate in, and consequently that our senses, as well as our reason, should be excited by, a divine object. Even the disposition of body in relation to things external, resulting from a habit of devotion, instead of being a scandal to a profound thinker, may only remind him of what Malebranche says, "that everything which passes mechanically within us is worthy of the wisdom of our Maker." Besides, man being constituted of a body and a soul, it is just that the body, with its various capabilities, which are so many gifts of God, should come forward on the side of religion, especially as it is the nature of man to need external assistance to enable him to rise to the meditation of divine things.

Internal piety, therefore, requires to be excited and nourished by ceremonies, or certain sensible signs.

Moreover, every man ought to be religious and pious, not only so as to be conscious within himself that he worships God, but also to the extent of promoting the piety and instruction of his fellow-men, especially of those who are intrusted to his care; and this cannot be done, unless we profess by some external sign the intimate sense of religion with which we are animated.

It is, then, quite natural and reasonable to find certain ceremonies or rites established in the Catholic Church to be used in the external exercise of religion, especially in the administration of the sacraments. These ceremonies are called sacred, because they express something holy or divine. They are called, by Hugo de St. Victor, sacraments of devotion. He divides them into three classes: the first consisting in things, such as the aspersion of water, the reception of ashes, the blessing of palms and tapers; the second in actions, as the sign of the cross, the insufflations, the extension of hands, genuflections; and the third in words, as the invocation of the Blessed Trinity, and that of *Deus in adjutorium*, for words themselves are sometimes sacraments. (Erudit. Theol. de Sacram., lib. ii, pars ix, 1.)

16. Did Christ ordain the ceremonies used in the administering of the sacraments?

No; these ceremonies are ordained by the Church: 1, *to excite in us devotion and reverence for the sacred mysteries of religion; and,* 2, *to indicate the meaning of these mysteries, and their effects.*

Our dear Saviour left the determination of particular ceremonies or rites to his apostles, and their successors in office, the pastors of the church. Now, in the ceremonial and discipline of the Church, there is no part without its use. That which might seem the most trifling has its proper object, and serves, in some way or other, to promote habits of humility, order, patience, recollection, and religion, so as to build up the Catholic character. Hence the fathers of the Council of Trent pronounce an anathema against all who should say that the received and approved rites of the Catholic Church may be despised or omitted, "*ad libitum*," by the priests, or that they may be changed by any pastor of the churches. (Sess. vii, Can. 13.) A most important and incalculably beneficial sentence, which saves Catholic piety from being at the mercy of weak, ignorant, though perhaps well-meaning, men, who, in proportion to their weakness and ignorance, are generally vain of being reformers or modifiers of ancient things.

Now, the Church has ordained her ceremonies for two great purposes, viz.: to imprint the mysteries of our faith on the heart and on the understanding, or, as the catechism says, to excite in us devotion and reverence for the sacred mysteries of our religion; and to indicate the meaning of these mysteries and their effects.

Can one suppose, for instance, that no permanent moral change could be wrought in the mind by the mere act of slowly and deliberately making the sign of the cross on the forehead, on the lips, and on the heart, when the Gospel is announced in the divine mysteries? Can we suppose that the man accustomed to this practice is as likely to blush at the cross in society, and to show the same vile submission to worldly respect, as another who knows of no such practice?

At the end of each lesson in the choral office the reader turns to the altar, saying, "*Tu autem, Domine, miserere nobis;*" because, as holy writers say, even that act of reading cannot be performed without some fault, since, if he read well, the mind is tempted with elation, and if ill, confusion follows; therefore he who reads stands always in need of the mercy of God, lest a work, in itself good, should be either corrupted by pride, or rendered ineffectual by false shame. Can it be thought that, to one instructed in this meaning, the mere ceremony does not incline him to humility, and warn him to beware how he hears as well as reads the divine word?

And is it not easier for the unlearned to understand from the exorcisms and insufflations used in baptism than from the Scriptures, that children are born under the yoke of the demon and infected with original sin; that, in like manner, the ashes strewed on the heads of men at the beginning of Lent teach them in a most forcible manner the vanity of all earthly things, and that, in Holy Week, the solemn ceremonies of the Church recall to and imprint on their minds a knowledge of the mysteries of human redemption?

Indeed the solemnity of the ritual itself has been known to produce permanent conversions. "Brother Theodoric, our monk," says Cæsar of Heisterbach, "as he often told me, when a youth in the world, came merely to visit a certain novice who was his relative, without any idea of being converted. It happened that a certain monk was buried on the same day; and when the community, having said the antiphon, *Clementissime Domine*, proceeded round the grave with great humility, imploring pardon, saying, '*Domine miserere super peccatore,*' he was so struck and excited, that he, who before had resisted all the exhortations of the Abbot Gerrard, now sought, with many prayers, to be received to conversion. Such a little matter sufficed to accomplish so great a work." (i, c. 21.)

After King Clovis had been converted to the faith and initiated by the holy Bishop Remigius in the truth necessary to be known, this prince went to the church to receive the holy sacrament of baptism. The road between the royal palace and the church was superbly adorned, shaded by hangings suspended from above; the walls of the houses were draped with costly silks; the church in which the king was to be baptized was decked out in all its splendor, and in it a sumptuous baptistery was erected, while the air was laden with delicious perfumes. The solemn procession was headed by the whole body of the clergy, one of them bearing the book of the Holy Gospels. It was preceded by the cross and a great number of lighted torches, and all implored in melodious tones the help of God and his saints, in the usual prayers of the Church. The king followed, being led on by the hand of the saintly bishop. The queen came next, and in her train an innumerable crowd. Now, when the king saw the long line of sacred ministers, when he heard their hallowed chants, and witnessed the devout splendor and magnificence of the function, he was inwardly moved, and filled with such joy and consolation that, turning round to the prelate, he asked whether perhaps this was the kingdom of God which had been promised to him should he embrace the faith? "No, sire," replied St. Remigius, "this is not the kingdom of God I promised you, but the way that leads thereto." (In Vita S. Remig. Apud Surium, 13 Jan.) From this we may learn the powerful influence which the sacred ceremonies connected with God's worship can exert on our minds, since they availed to soften the heart of the fierce conqueror, accustomed to live amid regal splendor, and to make him think that he was in heaven, when only on the path to the heavenly kingdom.

"Were I to enter the Catholic Church now," says a Protestant writer of the last century, "it would be apt to put me in mind of what St. John tells us he saw once in a vision: 'Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.' These lighted altars made me naturally think of what good old Simeon said of Christ: 'A light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.'"

Similar are the sentiments expressed by the celebrated Lavater, on finding himself in a Catholic church. "He does not know thee, O Jesus Christ! who dishonors even thy shadow: I honor all things, where I find the intention of honoring thee. I will love them for thy sake. I will love them, provided I find the least thing which makes me remember thee. What, then, do I behold here? What do I hear in this place? Does nothing under these majestic vaults speak to me of thee? This cross, the golden image, —is it not made for thy honor? The censer which waves round the priest, the *Gloria* sung in choirs, the peaceful light of the perpetual lamp, these lighted tapers,—all is done for thee! Why is the Host elevated, if it be not to honor thee, O Jesus Christ, who art dead for love of us! because it is no more bread, it is thy body? The believing Church bends the knee. It is in thy honor alone that these children, early instructed, make the sign of the cross, that their tongues sing thy praise, and that they strike their breasts thrice with their little hands. It is for love of thee, O Jesus Christ! that one kisses the spot which bears thy adorable blood; for thee the child who serves sounds the little bell, and for thee he does all that he does. The riches collected from distant countries, the magnificence of chasubles,—all that has relation to thee. Why are the walls and the high altar of marble clothed with verdant tapestry on the day of the Blessed Sacrament? For whom do they make a road of flowers? For whom are these banners embroidered? When the *Ave Maria* sounds, is it not all for thee? Matins, vespers, prime, and none, are they not consecrated to thee? These bells within a thousand towers, do they not bear thy image, cast in the very mould? Is it not for thee that they send forth their solemn tones? Is it not under thy protection, O Jesus Christ! that every man places himself who loves solitude, chastity, and poverty? Without thee the orders of St. Benedict and of St. Bernard would not have been founded. The cloister, the tonsure, the breviary, and the chaplet, render testimony of thee. O delightful rapture, O Jesus Christ! for thy disciple to trace the marks of thy finger where the eyes of the world see them not! O joy ineffable, for souls devoted to thee to behold in caves and in rocks, in every crucifix placed upon the hills and on the highways, thy seal and that of thy love! Who will not rejoice in the honors of which thou art the object and the soul? Who will not shed tears in hearing the words, 'Jesus Christ be praised'? Oh, the hypocrite who knows that name and answers not with joy, 'Amen;' who says not, with an intense transport, 'Jesus be blessed for eternity!

for eternity!'" ("Empfindungen eines Protestanten in einer Katholischen Kirche.")

It is thus that many of those who have distinguished themselves by their hostility to the "*religion of our fathers*," have admitted that that religion and its rights were venerable. Many of those who have been foremost in vilifying its principles, or in misrepresenting its tenets, have, in the midst of their bigoted bitterness, been compelled to acknowledge that its ceremonies were splendid and impressive. One may often see revilers of this stamp bowing during the celebration of the Mass, and owning that in the forms before them there was something indescribably awful—something in the objects around them that proclaimed the presence of the Deity—something that was calculated to awaken the inattentive, animate the lukewarm, and shed even over the spirit of the irreligious a feeling of sacred reverence, leading to penitence and to piety. Such have been the admissions of those who had not "faith in them,"—the confessions of men who merely gazed upon externals, and looked not beyond the surface. They knew not that the ceremonies which they witnessed were so many high and holy symbols, portraying to the eyes of the faithful the progress, the precepts, the struggles, and the sufferings, of Him who was offered for the transgressions of mankind. They knew not that *these* constituted the parts and the aggregate of a sacrifice, enjoined from the beginning as a sacrifice, that, to the true children of Christianity, is at once a sign of remembrance, and an instrument of propitiation.

17. What authority have we for the use of ceremonies?
The example of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

It has already been remarked that sacred ceremonies were instituted by God himself; for the holy patriarchs offered their prayers and sacrifices with peculiar rites and ceremonies. Besides, Almighty God, in express terms, instituted the sacred ceremony of circumcision with Abraham, and ordained, in the Old Law, special rites with which sacrifices were to be offered to him. Again, Christ himself hardly ever performed a miracle without using some ceremony, as when he made damp clay, and stretched out his hand to touch, and wrote upon the ground.

Sacred ceremonies were also instituted by the apostles. We find that many of the ceremonies used at Mass and in administering the sacraments were instituted by the apostles themselves, as they were used universally throughout the whole Church from the very earliest ages, and are attested by the primitive writers of Christianity to have been received from them. Of this kind are the sign of the cross, the holy-water, and a great part of the ceremonies of baptism. We should, then, pay great respect to sacred ceremonies on account of the ends for which they are used, and of the sacred truths and holy instructions which they impress upon the mind and the heart, and of the authority by which they have been instituted.

It is the Catholic, and he only, who beholds these sacred forms in their true light, who joins rightly in those ceremonies, and derives a spiritual advantage from their daily celebration. How necessary is it, then, that we be thoroughly acquainted with their meaning, with their general tendency, and with each and all of the wonderful incidents which they represent? All, at least all those who are capable of reading, should endeavor to acquire this most interesting and most salutary information. Culpable ignorance on this point amounts to a crime. Reverence and love for our dear Saviour, and everything that has reference to him and his holy religion, will induce us to learn the salutary meaning of the ceremonies of our holy religion. As baptism, when solemnly given by the priest, is accompanied by the most solemn and edifying ceremonies, it is well for us to be informed of the nature and meaning of these beautiful ceremonies of baptism.

The nature and meaning of the principal ceremonies used in baptism are:—1. The person to be baptized remains at the entrance of the church, to signify that baptism gives him the right to enter the church. 2. The name of a saint is given him, in order that he may have an intercessor with God, and an example for imitation. But there are some Catholics who, instead of choosing the name of a saint renowned for his virtues, give their child some outlandish heathen name unwashed by baptism. 3. The priest breathes three times in his face, to signify the new spiritual life which he receives by the grace of the Holy Ghost. 4. The priest makes the sign of the cross upon his forehead and breast, to signify that he is to become the property of his crucified Redeemer, whose doctrine he is to carry in his heart and profess openly. 5. The priest puts blessed salt into his mouth, as an emblem of Christian wisdom, and of preservation from the corruption of sin. 6. The priest repeats the exorcisms several times in the name of the Blessed Trinity, to free him from the power of the devil. 7. He lays his hand upon him, to signify God's protection; and then the stole, as a sign of the priest's power to admit him into the Church. 8. The priest touches his ears and nostrils with spittle, in imitation of our Saviour, to signify that, by the grace of baptism, his spiritual senses are opened to the doctrine of Christ. 9. The priest anoints him with the holy oil on the breast, between the shoulders and on the crown of the head, to signify that, as a champion of Christ and the anointed of God, he has now manfully to fight against the world and the devil. 10. The person to be baptized renounces Satan, his works and pomps, because no one can belong to Christ unless he renounces Satan, and all his works and all his pomps. 11. He promises to believe in Christ's doctrine, and to lead a holy life, and God promises him his grace and life everlasting: these mutual promises are called the covenant of baptism. 12. The priest places a white linen cloth upon his head, after baptism, to remind him that he should preserve his baptismal innocence, pure and spotless, until death. 13. The priest puts a lighted candle into his hand, after baptism, to remind him of his Christian duty to shine by a holy life before his fellow-men.

These baptismal ceremonies contain and clearly express our duties toward Almighty God.

A foreigner who has come to the United States, and wishes to enjoy the rights and privileges of an American citizen, has to appear in open court and declare his intention of becoming a citizen of the United States. If he then continues to reside, for five years, within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the grand republic, and conducts himself, during that time, as a man of good moral character, is attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same, he receives his naturalization papers as a citizen of the Union, after having declared on oath, in open court, that he will support the Constitution of the United States, and that he does absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign prince, potentate, or state sovereignty whatsoever, and particularly to the government of the country to which he was formerly subject. We, too, have become, on similar conditions, citizens of the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven. There are two great kingdoms in this world—the kingdom of Jesus Christ and of Satan. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is the Roman Catholic Church. In his kingdom alone are found true peace and happiness, the forgiveness of sins, the means to obtain the grace of God and to lead a virtuous life. To remain a faithful citizen and subject of this kingdom, is to be forever a citizen of God's kingdom in heaven. The kingdom of Satan in this world is that corrupt body composed of three foul and abominable members: "The concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and of the pride of life." One day our dear Saviour permitted Satan "to take him up into a high mountain, and to show him his kingdom of this world and the glory of it,"—that is, the riches, the honors, and the sinful pleasures of the flesh; and Satan said to him: "All this I will give thee, if, falling down, thou wilt adore me." (Matt. iv, 8, 9.) What Satan here promised to our Saviour, he promises to every one who wishes to follow him. To remain a faithful subject of Satan's kingdom, is to be forever his subject in the torments of hell. Now, we were born into this world as citizens and subjects of Satan. Our mothers knew this, and therefore they felt that something was wanting to fill up the measure of their happiness at our birth. It was not the subject of Satan, but the subject of Jesus Christ, that the mother of every one of us wished to press to her heart. We were therefore taken from the cradle, and in the midst of the rejoicings of the whole family, in the arms of a godfather and of a godmother who were to lend us their heart and tongue, we were taken, as it were, to the open court of Christ's kingdom on earth, that is, to the entrance of the house of God, humbly begging the Church to admit us to become her children, subjects of Jesus Christ, and citizens of his kingdom.

We were admitted on condition that we should always remain faithful subjects of Christ, conduct ourselves as fervent and holy Christians, be attached to the doctrine of the Church, and well disposed to receive the sacraments as weapons of defence against our enemies. After this, we had absolutely and entirely to renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign potentate, that is, the devil and all his associates. We solemnly promised and vowed that we would always and everywhere support and defend the Catholic Church as the only true Church of Christ.

Thereupon we received, as it were, our naturalization papers—that is, baptism, and thus became the children of God, members of the Church, brethren of Jesus Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God in heaven. These engagements were made in our name by our sponsors in baptism. After we had come to the use of reason, these duties were explained to us; and we renewed and ratified them on the day of our first communion.

In renewing our baptismal vows, we consecrated to God our whole being—body and soul. We consecrated to God our reason, by proclaiming publicly that we believed all that God has revealed. We consecrated to God our will; we consecrated our heart with all its affections, our body with all its senses, by renouncing Satan and all his works, by renouncing every sin whether in thought or desire, in word or action. Finally, we placed the seal upon this consecration, by declaring openly that we wished to belong to Jesus Christ now and forever.

But, nowadays, a sad spectacle is often witnessed. The Jews, who welcomed our dear Saviour by so many joyful hosannas, a few days after turned against him, and cried aloud: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Alas! that thousands of Christians should treat our dear Lord in the same ignominious manner! Were we to ask this or that father, "Where is your son who, about six years ago, received his first communion, and renewed and confirmed his baptismal vows most solemnly in presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, in presence of his holy angels, in presence of his parents and of a large congregation of Catholics," what would be his answer? "My son," he would say with tearful eyes,—"my son has become a gambler, a drunkard, a seducer of the innocent; he is an apostate, he hates religion, ridicules good Catholics, curses the Church and the priest. From a child of God he has become a child of the devil; from a follower of Christ he has become one ot his bitterest enemies; from an innocent Catholic he has become a most impious infidel; from an heir to heaven he has become an heir to hell. He has left the army of Christ to follow that of Lucifer. From the bread of angels he has turned to the husks of swine."

Thousands of parents can give this heart-rending answer concerning their children. To be preserved from falling into this fathomless abyss of sin and iniquity, we should keep the anniversary of our baptism, our spiritual birthday, with especial devotion, to thank God for so great a blessing. We should, if possible, receive holy communion on that day and endeavor to pass it in a spirit of recollection, reflecting that a grown person who, with a deliberate purpose, has accepted the doctrine of Christ, must live up to it to the end, since this doctrine is always truth for his understanding, justice and grace for his heart, and the condition of salvation for his eternal future. Noble birth brings obligations with it. So the infant is obliged by nature to respect and to obey his parents. So, by the mere fact of his birth, the citizen is subjected to the regular authorities which govern his country. Thus, with stronger reason, the Christian, in virtue of the choice which the Lord has made of him, owes forever his fidelity and his obedience to Jesus Christ and his Church, because from them he received his supernatural life. "Ah, my brethren," says St. Fildebert, "never forget the vows and promises of your baptism, offered to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Church is the witness of these your vows and promises. By them you are pledged to worship and honor the three divine persons. If you violate the vow made to the Father, you no longer possess a right to the inheritance of his children; if you fail in fidelity to the Son, you lose the fruit of his merits. In fine, if you lie to the Holy Ghost, you extinguish the charity he has shed in your hearts." Indeed, he who has had the happiness of being baptized, should, by right, never more offend Almighty God. There were saints, nay, even poor savages, who, after baptism, never sinned grievously.

An Indian, extremely attached to the worship of his false gods, understood at last that he was in error. Having been instructed in the mysteries of our holy religion, he requested to be baptized, in spite of the bonds which held him in infidelity. His conversion was so perfect, that he occupied himself wholly in works of charity. Some months after his baptism, the missionary (the Rev. F. Hetscher, C. SS. R.) sent for him to prepare him for his first confession. The neophyte seemed extremely surprised when it was explained to him how he should prepare himself to approach the sacrament of penance. "In the course of the instructions I received," answered he, "whenever you spoke of confessing my sins, I thought that you meant those committed before baptism, in order to make me detest them the more. But now you tell me that I must accuse myself of those committed after baptism! What! father, is it then possible that a person can be capable of transgressing the law of God after having been regenerated in the saving waters of baptism? Is it possible that a person, after having received so great a grace, can be so unfortunate as to lose it, so ungrateful as to offend him from whom he has received it?"

"This," says the missionary, "is the idea that the Indian neophyte conceives of the holiness of Christianity,—an idea truly capable of confounding the great majority of the Christians in Catholic countries, who, although they imbibe the maxims of the law of God with the milk of childhood, yet observe them so imperfectly; while the people whom they call barbarians, as soon as the light of the gospel shines upon them, become its most faithful observers, and preserve until death the precious innocence received in baptism!

Such is the beautiful doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ on the institution, the nature, the necessity, the efficacy, of baptism, and the eternal obligations which it causes us to contract. It is very sad, indeed, to think that such doctrine and practice have been audaciously, and, as it were, in sport, overthrown, disfigured, trodden under foot by pretended reformers, to the eternal ruin of an infinite number of souls. Oh, what joy and what thankfulness should be ours, since God has made us children of the Roman Catholic Church, in which the religion of Christ is explained without mixture of error; and where especially the lives of helpless infants are respected and protected from the very first moment of their existence! How different is their condition from that of the nations, ancient and modern, who have deprived themselves of the light of revelation! In the history of these nations we notice a horrifying contempt for the infant just born into this world. Lycurgus ordered it to be exposed at the feet of the magistrate, who should pronounce the sentence of life or death. Aristotle, in his "Republic," wished to have a law which should condemn to death every infant of delicate constitution, and should determine beforehand the number of children to be reared. Plato considers this arrangement very natural and very politic. The Gauls, says Cæsar, had the right of life and death over their wives and children. The manner in which this right was exercised was this: As soon as an infant was born, it was exposed at the feet of its father. On a sign given by him, it was immediately thrown into a sewer, or given to the pigs. On a more fatherly sign, it was taken up from the ground and preserved in life. Among pagan nations of old, we see only the Germans and Egyptians who appear to have been more docile to the inspirations of nature. As to the Jews, says Tacitus, they regard the killing of their supernumerary children as a crime. Even in our own age, almost everywhere, beyond the limits of Christendom, the infant is a victim sacrificed to every passion. Among savages, the father is master of the life of his children. In New Caledonia, the parents themselves often eat them. The Chinese sacrifice their children by thousands every day. In many provinces of the Celestial Empire, one daughter only is preserved in each house. In others, they do not preserve any; and the young men, when they marry, are obliged to buy wives from the neighboring provinces. The number of children sacrificed every year in the town of Pekin alone amounts, we are assured, to ten or twelve thousand. In our own country, that boasts so much of civilization and material progress, there are men everywhere who make it their business, with medicines and instruments, to carry on this slaughter of helpless infants. Many physicians make, in certain small towns alone, from three to four thousand dollars a year at this business.

What a vast number of ghouls are found in large cities who grow rich by killing infants! Many physicians advertise publicly, offering their services to enable people, as they say, "to enjoy the pleasures of marriage without the burden." Now, why is it that this horrible crime of child-murder is not easily found among Catholic mothers? Why is it that in Catholic mothers we notice that religious reverence for their infants which is unknown elsewhere? Why is it that the good Catholic mother guards, with the most watchful care, her infant, even before its birth, and presents it as soon as possible at the baptismal font? It is because she knows that an infant dying without baptism is forever excluded from the kingdom of God; but which, if baptized, is the temple of the Holy Ghost, the palace of the Most High, a child of God, an heir to heaven, and a brother of Jesus Christ. Why is it that the good Catholic mother presses her infant after baptism, with so much respect, to her heart? It is because she sees in it a sacred deposit placed in her hands by Almighty God, a hallowed being over whom watches a celestial spirit, and who is protected by a patron saint from his throne in heaven. In her eyes, her little babe is like a sacred vessel, and the veneration with which she embraces it partakes of that which she bears for the altar of the Lord. The prayer which she breathes upon the virgin brow of her darling seems to her to receive therefrom the odor of a pure incense that immediately is borne to the throne of God. She loves to penetrate in thought into the sanctuary of her child's soul. She feels an unspeakable happiness in recollecting herself there as she would do before the tabernacle, in order to adore, pray, and offer up acts of thanksgiving.

This respect, reverence, and love for infants, has been, from the time of the apostles, a distinguishing mark of a Roman Catholic Christian. At all times and in every Catholic country, where poor parents or unhappy victims of seduction could not support their children, love and reverence for them inspired good Catholics and religious societies to collect them, adopt them, open asylums where they could be supported, schools where they could be educated; and to attempt the life of a helpless babe has always been considered a crime of the blackest die.

18. Is it allowed to baptize the children of infidels against the will of their parents?

"No," says St. Thomas Aquinas; "it would be contrary to the practice of the Church."

The Roman Catholic Church never wished to baptize the children of infidels against their parents' will, even when she had full power under the Catholic emperors, Constantine and Theodosius, whose greatest friends were two holy bishops, St. Silvester and St. Ambrose. In the middle ages, when the Jews, chased from all other countries, found refuge in Rome, the Sovereign Pontiffs, according to the custom of the Church in past ages, strictly forbade their children to be baptized in spite of the parents. Reason sufficiently shows the prudence and wisdom of this conduct. To baptize them against the will of their parents is to expose the Catholic faith to the danger of profanation, and to deprive the parents of all legitimate authority over their children. Besides, the child, before it comes to the use of reason, is the property of its parents, the same as their house, goods, and cattle. But, when the child has come to the full use of reason, it can be baptized without the consent of its parents. There is, however, an exception to this general rule: when a child is found anywhere in imminent danger of death. In this case it may be baptized in private, if there is no danger to him who baptizes it, or no cause of scandal to others.

CHAPTER V.

ON CONFIRMATION.

WHEN a king levies soldiers to make war, he must have weapons wherewith to arm them. It would be utterly foolish to send them to fight without arms. It would be simply to sacrifice his men to no purpose, and to invite defeat. Surely God acts with, at least, equal wisdom: "He does not call," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "without giving, at the same time, to those whom he calls, all that is necessary to accomplish the end for which he calls." (Serm. i, de St. Joseph.) Now, in baptism, we were enrolled as soldiers in Christ's army. We were called by Almighty God to lead holy lives. We were called to fight and to defeat our evil inclinations, the wicked examples of the world, and the temptations of the devil. In this holy warfare we need weapons; that is, supernatural strength to defend ourselves against all our enemies and to defeat them.

While we were yet children, our duties, our temptations, our labors, were few, and a small degree of grace enabled us to comply faithfully with them. But, as we grew up, our passions became stronger, our struggles greater, and our temptations more violent. To meet these increasing difficulties, we required a new supply of strengthening grace, a new blessing of Almighty God. And Christ had repeatedly promised this blessing to all his followers. The Holy Ghost was to bestow it upon them: "I will ask the

Father," he said, "that he shall give you another Paraclete (comforter), that he may abide with you forever." (John xiv, 16.) For this blessing Christ commanded his disciples to wait before making war upon their and his enemies: "Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high." (Luke xxiv, 49.) As if he would say: My beloved apostles, you are baptized, it is true; you have received the grace of the Holy Ghost, yet you are not strong enough to confess my name; you are not perfect and valiant enough to overcome all the temptations of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil. Therefore, go not to battle before I send you from heaven spiritual arms, by which you may be able to defend yourselves against all your enemies.

On the feast of Pentecost our dear Saviour sent the promised blessing in abundance upon his apostles. He sent upon them the Spirit of Truth to enlighten them in the truths of salvation, to encourage them to announce these truths everywhere, to defend them, and even to lay down their lives for them.

Now it was the will of Jesus Christ that this same divine Spirit should come upon all his true followers, not indeed in the manner in which he came upon the apostles, but by means of the sacrament of confirmation.

1. What is confirmation?

Confirmation is a sacrament by which we receive the Holy Ghost, in order to become stròng and perfect Christians.

After baptism, confirmation comes next in order. This sacrament was formerly called *the seal*, or *signing*, or *spiritual seal*, the *seal of the Lord*, because those who are confirmed receive a seal or mark imprinted on their souls.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," says St. Paul, "whereby you have been sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv, 30.) This sacrament was also called *the imposition of hands*, and is so described in the Acts (xix, 6). It was also called the *anointing*, the *anointing with the chrism*, *the chrism of salvation*, or simply the *chrism*, a name which it still retains amongst the Greeks. But at present this sacrament is called *confirmation*. The word confirmation means the receiving of strength, because this sacrament strengthens and fortifies the worthy receiver in all the graces which he has received in baptism. For this reason confirmation is considered as the completion of baptism, increasing and confirming, as it does, that work which baptism began in us. It is so considered by the Church, as is evident from the words contained in the order for the administration of this sacrament: "Confirm, O Lord! what thou hast wrought in us." (Ps. lxvii, 29.) Although the apostles had been baptized, yet they remained weak in the practice of virtue until the Holy Ghost came upon them and completed the work which had been begun in them by baptism.

Although confirmation is the completion of baptism, yet it is a sacrament quite distinct from it; for these two sacraments differ from each other in their matter and form, in their ordinary minister, and especially in their effects.

By baptism we are born into the divine life of grace. By confirmation we are strengthened to become perfect Christians in the life of grace. (Eph. iv, 13.) In baptism we are enrolled as soldiers in Christ's army. In confirmation we receive our spiritual weapons, and are sent forth into actual warfare. The Holy Ghost is given in baptism, to cleanse us from sin and make us innocent. In confirmation he is given us, to render us perfect in virtue. All this is evident from Holy Scripture: "When the apostles, who were at Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For he was not as yet come upon any of them; but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts viii, 14–17.) In this passage we notice the distinction between *baptism* and *confirmation*: "They had not received the Holy Ghost, for they had only been baptized:" *the sacramental sign*, the imposition of hands; *the grace produced.* "They received the Holy Ghost;" *the minister of the sacrament; not the Deacon Philip*, or the disciples who had baptized the Samaritans, but the apostles.

At a later period (Acts xix), St. Paul found at Ephesus certain disciples,—that is, men truly converted to the doctrine of Christ,—and asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" And they answered, for they had not been sufficiently instructed: "We have not as much as heard whether there is a Holy Ghost." The apostle completed their instruction, baptized them, and afterward laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost, the gift of tongues and prophecy.

There are also many testimonies of the fathers to show that confirmation is a sacrament distinct from baptism. St. Cyprian says: "Our practice is that those who have been baptized in the Church should be presented to the bishops, that, by our prayer and the imposition of hands, they may receive the Holy Ghost." (Epist. 73 ad Jubaianum.)

Pope St. Cornelius, speaking of Novatian, says of this schismatic, that, after his baptism, "he had not been presented to the bishop to receive from him the sacred seal (confirmation), which alone gives the Holy Ghost." (Apud. Euseb., H. E., l. vi, c. 43.) From these passages of Holy Scripture and of the writings of the fathers of the Church, it is evident that confirmation is a true and proper sacrament, distinct from baptism, as the Catholic Church has always taught and believed. She therefore has condemned the false assertion of heretics that confirmation is merely a ceremony, or a course of instruction in Christian doctrine, which children are to receive when they have come to the age of reason. This condemnation is expressed in the following words of the Council of Trent: "If any one says that the confirmation of those who have been baptized is an idle ceremony, and not rather a true and proper sacrament; or that of old it was nothing more than a kind of catechism, whereby they who were near adolescence gave an account of their faith in the face of the Church, let him be anathema."

Holy Scripture, however, does not inform us of the exact time when our Lord instituted this sacrament, appointed its matter or outward sign, its form, or the words to be used in its administration, and promised the peculiar graces to be given by it. It is generally believed that it was after the resurrection, when he instructed his apostles in the things belonging to the kingdom of God. (Acts i, 3.)

As in baptism, so we find in confirmation the three things that are necessary to constitute a sacrament. We have in confirmation a sensible sign, an outward rite, which exteriorly expresses the particular grace which God infuses into the soul of the worthy receiver of this sacrament. This sensible sign, or the matter of confirmation, is the imposition of hands, together with the anointing with the chrism. When the apostles, Peter and John, went down to Samaria to confirm the disciples there, the sacrament is described as given by the imposition of hands. (Acts viii, 17.) The bishop first imposes his hands in general over all who are to be confirmed, and next anoints each one in particular with the holy chrism. The chrism is the most sacred of the three holy oils, which are solemnly blessed by the bishop every Maundy-Thursday. It is made of the oil of olives, mixed with balm. That chrism is also part of the matter of confirmation, we know from the constant practice of the Church in administering this sacrament. "Anointed, also, must he of necessity be," says St. Cyprian, "who is baptized, in order that, having received the chrism,—that is, the unction,—he may be the anointed of God, and have within him the grace of Christ." (Epist. 70 ad Januar.)

The form of this sacrament to be applied to its matter consists of the words used by the bishop whilst anointing the forehead of the person to be confirmed: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." All this is the outward sign or visible part of the sacrament of confirmation.

There is also the inward grace, or that part which is invisibly performed by God, viz.: the Holy Ghost, with his gifts, is, in a special manner, given to the soul. For it is said in Holy Scripture: "The apostles (Peter and John) prayed for them (the Samaritans) that they might receive the Holy Ghost; then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts, viii, 15-17.)

As, in other sacraments, the matter represents and signifies the effect of the sacrament, so it is here. The imposition of hands represents the communication of the Holy Ghost to the soul. The hand is the instrument and sign of strength, and in Holy Scripture the power of God is called the hand. (Deut. vii, 8.) To impose their hands on any one, is to call down upon him the strength and power of God.

The anointing of the forehead with chrism represents the nature and fulness of the grace received by the inward unction of the Holy Ghost. The oil of which the chrism is composed, has certain peculiar qualities. It easily flows, spreads, and penetrates, and thus represents the grace of confirmation, which enters into the soul and diffuses itself throughout all her powers. Oil is a smooth and mild substance. As such it represents the spirit of meekness and patience under all trials. The balm of which the chrism is also composed, sends forth a sweet smell, and possesses qualities which enable it to preserve things from being corrupted. It thus represents the Christian virtues which this sacrament enables us to practise, and which are called in Scripture, "An odor of sweetness in the sight of the Most High." (Ecclus. xxiv, 23.) These virtues, like balm, have a powerful influence in preserving men from corruption, shedding forth, as they do, a sweet odor on all within their reach. (2 Cor. ii, 15.)

There is *the institution of Christ.* That this sacrament was instituted by Christ is evident from the fact that the apostles administered it as a means to bring down, in a special manner, the Holy Ghost upon those who had been baptized. It is also evident from the fact that the Church has excluded from her communion all those who refuse to believe in confirmation as a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ. (Council of Trent, Sess. vii.)

The next point to be explained is that *in confirmation we receive the Holy Ghost.* Most undoubtedly the first and most precious benefit of confirmation is the gift which the Holy Ghost makes of himself. Yes, the Spirit of God, the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son as from one and the same principle; the Spirit who speaks by the prophets, works miracles, reveals the future, fathoms the depths of God, grants gifts according to his own pleasure; the Spirit who knows all things, can do all things, governs all things, works the sanctification of man, the resurrection of the body,—this Spirit is given to the worthy receiver of confirmation. He fixes his dwelling in the soul, and possesses it by his presence. But this divine Spirit does not establish his dwelling in a well-prepared soul without enriching it with incomprehensible treasures. These precious favors are *virtues*, *gifts*, *fruits* and *beatitudes*. He communicates to the soul the theological virtues of a lively faith, of a confident hope, and of an ardent charity, together with the moral virtues of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, prudence, which dispose the mind to the knowledge and love of truth; and the virtues of justice, fortitude, and temperance, which dispose the will to do good and to avoid evil.

The *gifts* which the Holy Ghost bestows are certain supernatural habits disposing the soul to practise the moral virtues in a very excellent degree. As those virtues are seven, we likewise reckon seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. The gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge and counsel, assist us in practising in an excellent way the virtues of wisdom, understanding, knowledge and prudence; and the gifts of piety, fortitude, and the fear of God, give us strength to practise, with great perfection, the virtues of justice, fortitude, and temperance.

The acts of these theological and moral virtues, and of the supernatural habits which we name gifts, are called the *fruits* of the Holy Ghost. These acts are, in fact, produced in us by the Holy Ghost, just as good fruits are by a good tree. St. Paul enumerates twelve of them: "Charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity." (Gal. v, 22.)

When the produce of these fruits is abundant and splendid, it is called a *beatitude*. Our dear Saviour began the preaching of his gospel by proclaiming eight beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, . . . the meek, . . . they that mourn, . . . they that hunger and thirst after justice, . . . the merciful, . . . the clean of heart, . . . the peace-makers, . . . they that suffer persecution for justice' sake." (Matt. v, 3–10.) Blessed, in short, are they that are animated and guided by the Spirit of God; for they, says the apostle, are the sons of God (Rom. viii, 14); and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. viii, 9.) After confirmation, then, the Holy Ghost is in the soul, as a king in the midst of his kingdom to hold the command; as a master in his family to preside over it; as a shepherd with his flock to direct it. Our heart, then, is a species of living paradise filled with the odoriferous flowers of the spiritual treasures of the Holy Ghost. All heavenly blessings, all virtues, reside in it, as it were, by agreement: faith with its flaming torch, hope with its boundless desires, charity with its glowing fervor. The blessed spirits themselves feel happy in keeping company with a soul in which the Holy Ghost is dwelling. All heaven seems to be with it, because God himself is in it.

Now, in confirmation, the Holy Ghost comes into us for the purpose of making us *strong and perfect Christians.*

By baptism we are born again spiritually; but this spirit at birth leaves us "like new-born infants" (1 Pet. ii, 2), with a certain weakness and tenderness of childhood about us. But in confirmation the Holy Ghost comes to us to strengthen us and render us fit to combat our enemies, and to endure trials and hardships like strong and good soldiers of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim. ii, 3.) Thus, in confirmation, the Holy Ghost perfects that work which he began in baptism.

This, however, does not mean that, by confirmation, we are rendered so perfect that nothing could be added to our perfection; it does not mean that the Holy Ghost is given to us in such fulness that nothing more remains to be given; no, it means only that, in confirmation, such a measure of grace is given as enables us to practise the Christian virtues, and become perfect by the practice of these virtues; it means that, in confirmation, we receive a title to all those gifts and graces which, at any time, will be necessary for us to maintain and profess our faith. These, of course, will vary in different persons. Our state of life, and certain circumstances of our life, may call for a more particular exercise of one or other of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Now, in confirmation, we receive them in such a manner as to have the benefit of them whenever occasion more especially calls for them.

In the early times of the Church those who were confirmed commonly received also some miraculous powers, such as the gifts of healing, of speaking, or of interpreting languages, or of prophecy. These are often mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St. Paul (1 Cor. xiv). These gifts, however, were not given for the good of those who received them, but for the benefit of others, for whom such miraculous exhibitions of God's power were necessary in the infant state of the Church. But, as these gifts are no longer necessary, we do not now receive them: "But if there is now no testimony to the presence of the Holy Ghost by means of these miracles," says St. Augustine, "whence is it proved, whence does every one know, that he has received the Holy Ghost? Let him ask himself," says this saint, "whether he truly loves his neighbor, whether there is in him the love of peace and unity, the love of the Church spread over the whole universe, the love and observance of her doctrine. If this love is in his heart, let him rest assured that the Holy Ghost is in him; for such a love cannot exist in a heart without the presence of the Holy Ghost who communicates it. It is the great Apostle St. Paul who assures us of this truth: 'The charity of God,' says he, 'is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given us.'" (T. ii, Tr. vi in Epist. Joan., n. 10.)

Those graces or gifts, then, which are necessary for our sanctification, are bestowed on us in confirmation by the Holy Ghost as much as on those who first received this sacrament. If well prepared, we receive, like the first Christians, the Holy Ghost, the spirit of life, to animate us; the spirit of grace, to sanctify us; the spirit of love, to unite us to himself; the spirit of prudence, to guide us; the spirit of fortitude, to strengthen us; the spirit of piety, to comfort us and make us fervent; the spirit of peace, to calm our passions; the spirit of purity, to make us pure; the spirit of liberty, to detach us from all earthly things; the spirit of joy, to console us; the spirit of humility, to inspire us with a mean opinion of ourselves; the spirit of obedience, to bring us in perfect subjection to the divine will; the spirit of charity, to accompany all our thoughts, words, and actions.

Another special effect of the sacrament of confirmation is that, like the sacrament of baptism, it imprints an indelible mark or character on the soul. Hence this sacrament can never be repeated, even though it should have been received in mortal sin. The nature of this character of confirmation imposes upon us the obligation to profess our faith openly, and never to deny our religion on any account whatever, but, like good soldiers of Christ, to be faithful to him unto death. The soldiers of a government pay every attention to the laws of their calling and to the orders of their officers. They expose themselves to every kind of labor and danger—in marches, in sieges, in battles. They endure heats and colds, and all the inclemency of the weather and the seasons. They suffer hunger and thirst, watchings and every other hardship, to which their station of life exposes them. They undergo privations and dangers, and even death itself, and they do all this in consideration of a scanty pay. With how much greater courage and endurance should we stand to our colors, fight manfully the battles of our Lord, and rather die than change sides, or go over to the enemy by committing mortal sin!

In 1648, two boys, one French, the other English, were seized by the Moorish pirates and brought to Tunis. There they were sold as slaves to two Mohametans, who lived near each other. The boys were about fifteen years old. Their cruel masters did every thing in their power to force them to apostatize, but in vain. The French boy was a good Catholic, well instructed in his holy faith. He soon had the happiness of instructing and converting his English companion. Soon after, some Englishmen came to Tunis to ransom their Protestant countryman, but finding that the little English boy had become a Catholic, and intended to remain so, they refused to ransom him. The Moorish masters seemed now to vie with each other in cruelty, each eager to force his youthful captive to apostatize. Often the two boys were bastinadoed till they lay on the ground half-dead. Once the English boy found his companion so stretched on the ground. He called him by name, and asked him if he were still living. The French boy answered in a feeble voice: "I am a Christian. A Christian I shall live and die." The English boy, hearing this, cast himself on the ground, and kissed reverently the bleeding feet of his companion. Some Moors, who were present, asked the English boy why he acted thus. "I honor those blessed limbs," he answered, "which have suffered for Jesus, my Saviour and my God."

The Moors, enraged at these words, drove the brave boy out of the house. Some time after, when the wounds of the French boy had healed, he went to visit his English companion. He found him stretched on a mat, in presence of his master and other Moors, who had been cruelly torturing him. The brave boy cast an indignant look at the cruel Moors, then, approaching his wounded companion, said: "Tell me, my friend, whom do you love more, Jesus our Lord, or Mahomet?" The English boy answered in a clear voice: "I love Jesus above every thing. I am a Christian. A Christian I will live and die." The Moors were enraged at the French boy. One of them drew a knife, and threatened to cut off his ears. The courageous boy, instead of running away, sprang toward the Moor, snatched a knife from his girdle, and with it cut off one of his own ears, and turning to the astonished Moor, asked him if he wished to have the other ear also. The knife was taken from him, and the Moors, despairing of perverting such brave youths, left them in peace. The following year, the pest broke out in Tunis, and God called these noble youths to their eternal rewards. (Stolberg.)

We who are confirmed are obliged to defend our faith when we hear the wicked assail its dogmas, and libertines oppose its morality. We should fear neither railleries nor threats—no, not even death itself, but, like good soldiers of Christ, we should sustain the interests of our King to the full extent of our ability. This is the allegiance we owe to him, in quality of his soldiers; this is the obligation we contract when we receive the character of soldiers of Christ by confirmation.

He who has become a soldier of Christ has no longer anything to do with the devil's bounty—with ill-gotten goods, with money pilfered from employers, with bribes and frauds against the government, with dishonest speculations. If a soldier of Christ is dishonest, if he retains ill-gotten goods, if he is ready to sell his oath, his conscience, his soul, and God himself for money, he then holds the devil's bounty, he is a traitor to the cause of Jesus Christ, who will not tolerate such a thief in his camp.

A soldier of Christ has nothing to do in the recruiting-office of hell—in that bad saloon and barroom, in that house of infamy, that den of Satan where the devil gains so many followers; where beggary, despair and death are dealt out to wretched fathers, to brutal husbands, and to wretched women.

A soldier of Christ does not utter the devil's passwords—those horrid curses, those obscene words, those words of double meaning. He who loves to utter such words shows clearly that he belongs, body and soul, to Satan's camp. His cursing tongue betrays him; his language is the language of hell; his presence among the faithful soldiers of Christ is a shame and a scandal.

A soldier of Christ is not seen on the devil's parade-ground—in the immoral theatre, in the ball-room where the lascivious dance goes on, and the midnight revel of thoughtless, giddy men and women, who, flushed with wine and excitement, are whirled along by the tide of passion, till at last, in shame and remorse, their eyes are opened to their ruin. These are the pomps of the devil which we solemnly renounced at baptism, and which we bound ourselves in confirmation to oppose and to combat. To return to them again is to be traitors to Christ and slaves of the devil.

A soldier of Christ does not partake of the devil's food, of the husks of swine, of the foul pleasures of sensuality. By the law of Moses, those who were guilty of such crimes were hurried outside the camp and stoned to death. But is the camp, the Church of Jesus Christ, less holy than that of Moses? How, then, can one think that our Lord Jesus Christ will suffer such shameful crimes to go unpunished?

A soldier of Christ is forbidden to wear the devil's badge, the insignia of a secret society, of freemasonry. A soldier of Christ who wears the regalia of a freemason is excommunicated. He has rejected our Lord Jesus Christ. His regalia prove that he belongs to the devil's own body-guard.

2. Who can give confirmation?

The Catholic bishops only, as successors of the apostles, have power to give confirmation.

The ordinary minister of confirmation is a bishop only This means that, as a rule, no one else has the power of administering this sacrament. This is clear enough from the passage in the Acts of the Apostles (viii, 17) already referred to, where we are told that the apostles, St. Peter and St. John, were sent to confirm the new converts of Samaria. And both the general usage of the Church and the decrees of different popes and councils prove the same thing. (Council of Trent, Sess. vii.) However, it is certain, on the other hand, that a priest might administer this sacrament, if the pope should delegate to him the power to do so. Yet, even in this case, the oil must have been blessed by a bishop. The bishop, being the only ordinary minister of confirmation, is, by this very circumstance, obliged to visit in person all the churches, all the parishes, of his diocese, and to repeat these visits after the lapse of some time. Every Catholic who is not confirmed has to appear before him and to reply to his questions, and, in the literal sense of the words, to *pass under his hands*. This obligation of giving and receiving confirmation is one of the causes which determine the division of the Universal Church into dioceses, and is, as is admitted by all, one of the strongest bonds of diocesan, and consequently of Catholic, unity.

3. How does the bishop give confirmation?

The bishop, 1, *extends his hands over all who are to be confirmed, and prays that the Holy Ghost may come down upon them*; 2, *he lays his hands upon each one in particular, makes the sign of the cross, with chrism, on the forehead, saying: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;"* 3, *he gives a slight blow on the cheek of the person confirmed*; 4, *he finishes by giving his blessing to all.*

1. Every Catholic who has arrived at the critical age when the obligation of practising virtue begins—all young

persons who cannot continue good Christians without great efforts, are carefully prepared by special instructions. On the appointed day, they present themselves in the temple of God, ranged in front in two lines like soldiers: they come, in fact, to be the armed knights of Christ. Meanwhile, the bishop, after having, by means of some questions and a sort of examination, assured himself of their being sufficiently instructed, kneels down and invokes the Spirit of God by chanting or reciting the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, while all candidates are kneeling. After this invocation the bishop rises. He extends his hands over the candidates, and at the same time entreats the Lord to send down upon them, from on high, "the spirit of wisdom and strength, the spirit of counsel and understanding, the spirit of piety, knowledge, and the fear of God," and to vouchsafe, of his goodness, to sign them with the sign of the cross unto life eternal. The clergy and the people unite in these prayers, by saying aloud, after each of them, "Amen:" "So be it."

2. Then the bishop approaches the persons to be confirmed. He lays his hands upon each one in particular, anoints the forehead with holy chrism in the form of a cross, saying: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

3. Fortified by this divine anointing, the confirmed person has become a soldier of Christ. The bishop would seem to wish at once to put his constancy to the trial. He does for him, who is now a knight of the Church militant, what he is accustomed to do when he blesses a warrior. After having placed in the hands of the knight the sword of war, the bishop strikes him three times on the shoulder and once on the cheek, as though for the purpose of testing

the extent of his courage, saying at the same time: "Be thou a peaceful and brave warrior, faithful and devoted to God." In the same manner, after marking the forehead of the confirmed Christian with the sign of the cross, the bishop gently puts his hand on his cheek, saying: "Peace be with thee."

4. At last the bishop prays for all those whom he has confirmed, and blesses them in these words: "The Lord bless you out of Sion, that you may see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life, and attain to life everlasting."

4. Why does the bishop make the sign of the cross on the forehead of those whom he confirms?

To remind them that they must never be ashamed of the cross, but boldly profess their faith in Jesus crucified.

The bishop anoints the person to be confirmed. When a material temple has been erected in honor of the Lord, it is solemnly consecrated by prayer, the sign of the cross, and sacred anointments, because the Lord of heaven and earth is to dwell therein. In like manner, our bodies are consecrated by prayer, the sign of the cross, and sacred anointments, because our souls live therein, and are the sanctuaries of the Holy Ghost. "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that you are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" Like material temples, our bodies are purified by the waters of baptism, marked with the sign of the cross, cleansed by the salt of wisdom, anointed by the holy oils of baptism and confirmation; and then, however vile they may be in themselves, those bodies are literally consecrated at the angelic table by their contact with the very flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. The consecration of these living temples will one day be completed by extreme unction, in the administration of which these anointments are repeated.

The anointment in confirmation is made on the forehead, which is the seat of bashfulness and fear, to signify that we should never blush or be afraid to confess the name of Jesus Christ, even at the peril of our lives. The anointing is made in the form of a "cross," to give us to understand that we should never be ashamed of the cross of Christ, but should carry it with joy, after the example of our Lord; that we should never neglect the practices of religion, through fear of ridicule or scorn. A Christian should never blush at poverty, humiliation, or affronts; on the contrary, he should rather rejoice and glory in them; for, by the patient endurance of these things, he renders himself in some way like unto his divine Master, who, when on this earth, submitted to poverty, humiliations, and contempt. The cross of Jesus Christ should be of more value to us than all the treasures of this world.

5. Why does the bishop give the persons whom he confirms a slight blow on the cheek?

To remind them that they must be ready to suffer, and even to die, for Christ.

When the bishop has anointed the person whom he is confirming, he immediately gives him a gentle stroke on the cheek, to remind him that, being now made a soldier of Jesus Christ by confirmation, he must manfully fight against all the enemies of his salvation, bear with meekness and patience all crosses, persecutions, and trials, for the sake of his Lord, suffer all sorts of hardship, loss of goods, imprisonment, and, if necessary, die for Christ, by enduring martyrdom and shedding for him the last drop of his blood.

In giving a gentle stroke on the cheek, the bishop says, "Peace be with you:" to teach us that the only way to true peace in this world, as well as in the next, is to suffer, patiently for Christ's sake; and also to encourage us to do so from the hope of a reward, according to our Lord's promise: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." (Matt. xi, 29.)

6. Is confirmation necessary to salvation?

Confirmation is not absolutely necessary to salvation; yet it would be a great sin to neglect to receive it, or to despise it.

The sacrament of confirmation is not, like baptism, absolutely necessary for salvation; it is not an *essential* means of salvation. It is, however, so necessary to be received, that it cannot be wilfully neglected without a grievous sin. This opinion, says St. Alphonsus, must be followed as having been decided by Pope Benedict XIV, in a bull concerning the Greeks, wherein he says: "They (who are not confirmed) are to be admonished by the bishops that they make themselves guilty of a grievous sin if they refuse and neglect to receive confirmation when they have an opportunity." (Hom. Apost., Tract. xiv, de Conf., n. 17.) Those who have not received this sacrament are feeble and weak, like children just born. They are soldiers without arms, who are not able to repel the attacks made on them by the devil, by wicked men, and by the flesh. "All," says Pope Clement, "should come without delay to be born again to God in holy baptism, and next to be sealed by the bishop, that is, to receive the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghost; since no one who omits this sacrament—not because he has no opportunity of receiving it, but because he wilfully or contemptuously neglects to do so—can become a full-grown Christian. This we have received from the blessed Peter. This was also the teaching of the other apostles, who were instructed by our Lord." (Catech. Rom., Part II, c. 3.) "It is then," says St. Thomas, "very dangerous to leave this life without having been confirmed." This is especially true in a persecuting country; or in a country like this, where Catholic faith and morals are so much opposed and ridiculed by those among whom we live. The days in which we now live are "evil days;" for a host of virulent writers are daily making attacks on our faith, and the pulpit and the platform are resounding with false charges against our religion We are daily assailed by the wicked tongues of hired defamers. In every part of the country emissaries of error are strolling about, seeking, by every means at their command, to destroy the faith of Catholics. Catholic morals, too, are assailed and held up to ridicule by the scoffs and sneers of irreligious people. The practices of piety are laughed at. The most essential duties of morality are made light of, and every effort is made to render contemptible things desirable and holy. Surrounded, as we are, in these evil days, by so many dangers, we render ourselves guilty of grievous sin if we do not avail ourselves of so powerful an aid as Jesus Christ has given us in confirmation, in order to ward off the repeated attacks of the enemies of our salvation.

In the apostles, we have a striking example of the necessity or exceeding great utility of receiving the special graces of the Holy Ghost, such as are conferred upon us in confirmation. The apostles had been three years with Christ, they had seen his miracles, they had heard his instructions, they had witnessed his example, etc., yet they had not courage to profess and practise what their divine Master required of them. They even forsook him; they denied him, and dared not show themselves in public, or appear to be his disciples. But, no sooner had they received the Holy Ghost, with his gifts and graces, than their minds were enlightened, and their hearts filled with zeal and courage. Being "thus endued with power from on high," (Luke xxiv, 49), they boldly professed, publicly preached, and courageously, and even joyfully, suffered for the religion which they professed and preached. The sacrament of confirmation works the like beneficial effects in the souls of those who receive it worthily.

Constantius Chloris, father of Constantine the Great, although a pagan, had in his palace a great number of confirmed Christians, of whom many were officers of his household. One day he was desirous of putting their faith to trial, and for this purpose he assembled them all before him, and addressed them in language calculated to make them dissemble. At last, he obliged them to tell him plainly whether or not they were Christians. Some, influenced by human respect, and fearful of losing the place they held in the court, denied their religion. The greater number, however, strengthened in their faith, openly declared themselves Christians. Then Constantius spoke out, in undisguised language, the sentiments of his heart; he praised the fortitude of those who were prepared to sacrifice worldly property sooner than deny their religion; he reproached in bitter terms the easy compliance of those who feared to maintain their religious belief. "How," said he, "can they be faithful to the emperor when they have proved so disloyal to God?" And so he removed them from his court, dismissed them from his service. With regard to those who were prepared to sacrifice everything sooner than renounce their faith, he looked on them as his most trustworthy servants; he maintained them in their office, formed his guard principally from them, and ever afterward showed them peculiar marks of his affection and confidence. "They are," said he, "men of character and faithful to God: they will never prove disloyal to me."

Hormisdas was of the chief nobility among the Persians, and was son to the governor of a province. Varanes, the King of Persia, sent for him and commanded him to renounce Jesus Christ. Hormisdas answered him, "that this would offend God, and transgress the laws of charity and justice; that whoever dares to violate the supreme law of the sovereign Lord of all things, would more easily betray his king, who is only a mortal man. If the latter be a crime deserving of the worst of deaths, what must it be to renounce the God of the universe?" The king was enraged at this wise and just answer, and caused him to be deprived of his office, honors, and goods, and even stripped him of his very clothes, except a small piece of linen that covered his waist; and ordered him, in this naked condition, to drive and look after the camels of the army. A long time after, the king, looking out of his chamber-window, saw Hormisdas all sunburnt and covered with dust, and calling to mind his former dignity and riches and the high station of his father, sent for him, ordered a shirt to be given him, and said to him: "Now, at least, lay aside thy obstinacy and renounce the carpenter's son." The saint, transported with holy zeal, tore the shirt or tunic and threw it away, saying: "If you thought that I should be so easily tempted to abandon the law of God, keep your fine present with your impiety." Incensed at this boldness, the king banished him again from his presence. St. Hormisdas happily finished his earthly career. He is named in the Roman Martyrology. (Alban Butler.)

Julian the Apostate, having resolved to make solemn profession of idolatry, ordered preparations to be made for a sacrifice to the idols, in one of the pagan temples. On the day appointed, he repaired thither, accompanied by his court, in great pomp, that the sacrifice might be celebrated with all possible magnificence. All being ready, he made a sign to the priests to commence the impious rite; but what was their astonishment, when they found themselves unable to proceed with it! Their knives, which they had well prepared, could make no impression on the flesh of the victims, and the fire which they had lighted on the altar was suddenly extinguished. The sacrificing priest said: "There is some unknown power present that interrupts our ceremonies." Then addressing the emperor, "There must be," he observed, "some one present who has been baptized or confirmed." Julian ordered that an inquiry should be made, when behold! a boy, one of his own pages, came forward and said: "Know, sire, that I am a Christian, and have been confirmed. A few days since, I was anointed with holy oil, to strengthen me for the combat. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, who, by his cross, has redeemed me. I acknowledge him only for my God, and I glory in belonging to him. It was I—or rather it was the God whom I serve, who prevented the impiety you were going to commit. I invoked the sacred name of Jesus Christ, and the demons could not be acknowledged as gods. At that sacred name,—the name of the true and only God, the devils have been put to flight!" The emperor, who had formerly professed Christianity, aware of the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, was seized with terror; and, apprehending the effects of the divine vengeance, left the temple, covered with confusion, without uttering a single word. The courageous young soldier of Christ immediately reported to the Christians all that had occurred. They rendered glory to God, and acknowledged how terrible to the devils those are in whom the virtue of Jesus Christ dwells by the sacrament of confirmation, when it is received with proper dispositions. (Prudentius.)

There are, on the other hand, the examples of those who, having neglected to receive confirmation, had not sufficient strength to resist the temptations of the devil. In the third century, a certain man, named Novatian, was baptized in bed during a dangerous illness. He recovered from his illness, but neglected to receive the sacrament of confirmation. He was afterward ordained priest. He was requested to assist the faithful who, at that time, were dragged to the place of punishment. He answered that he did not intend to discharge the duties of a priest, but that his mind was made up for something else. This was nothing less than to become pope. At this time, Cornelius was elected pope, and Novatian, by intrigue, had himself consecrated privately by three illiterate bishops. Thus he was the first antipope who ever raised a schism in the Church of Rome. But what will not ambition do? While he administered the Eucharist to his partisans, he exacted an oath from every one of them, saying: "Swear to me, by the blood of Jesus Christ, that you will never leave my party to join Cornelius." He taught that the Church could not forgive any mortal sin committed after baptism, nor use any indulgence toward those who had committed the sin of idolatry through fear of persecution, and that confirmation was no sacrament. (Hist. of Heres. by St. Alph.) The fathers of the Church unite in saying that Novatian committed all these crimes, because he had neglected to receive the sacrament of confirmation.

7. Who can receive confirmation?

All baptized persons who are duly prepared.

As to those who may receive confirmation, every one who is baptized and has not yet been confirmed, and is duly prepared, may be admitted to this sacrament. At one time it was something common to confirm infants immediately after baptism. This practice is still retained in some countries of the East, by special permission of the Holy See. At present, however, it is the general custom not to confirm those who have not attained the use of reason, or at least not unless they are at the point of death. The reason is, because it is thought that the graces of confirmation will be of the greatest benefit to the young Christian, if received at that time when he begins to experience the conflict with the enemies of his salvation. Another reason for deferring confirmation till the recipients have come to the use of reason is, that they may be better instructed and prepared to receive it.

8. How are persons to prepare themselves for confirmation?

1. *They must be free from all mortal sins; 2, know the principal truths of faith, especially those concerning this sacrament.*

Strictly speaking, all that is necessary for a person to receive confirmation worthily is to be in the state of grace. Where, as in old times, the sacrament was received by infants, the state of grace was secured for them by the sacrament of baptism which they had received; but now, confirmation is received only by persons who have come to the use of reason. Now, such persons are capable of committing mortal sin, and might therefore receive this sacrament sacrilegiously, like any other sacrament of the living. It is, then, necessary for them to prepare themselves for the worthy reception of this sacrament. This preparation consists chiefly in being free from mortal sin, and in knowing the principal truths of faith, especially those concerning this sacrament:—

1. Persons to be confirmed must be free from mortal sin. The sacrament of confirmation is a sacrament of the living. It requires, then, the spiritual life of grace in the person who receives it. The effect of confirmation is to increase and to strengthen this spiritual life in the soul. But this life of grace cannot be strengthened in a soul in which it is not found. To receive, then, confirmation worthily, it is necessary to be in the state of grace. Holy Scripture assures us that "the Holy Spirit of wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins." (Wis. i, 4.) It would, therefore, be the grievous sin of sacrilege for one to receive this sacrament in the state of mortal sin. For this reason, every one who knows that he is in the state of mortal sin, and is about to be confirmed, should recover the grace of God by making a good confession. Perfect contrition, it is true, united to a sincere desire of receiving the sacrament of penance, will reconcile the sinner to God; yet, who can be certain of having perfect contrition? As it is so easy to be deceived in this matter, he who has come to the use of reason should make a good confession before receiving confirmation, in order to be sure of receiving it worthily.

2. The persons to be confirmed should also be well instructed in the principal truths of faith, especially in those concerning the nature, efficacy, and dignity of this sacrament. In former times confirmation was conferred upon infants before they had come to the use of reason; and so, the

preparation now required was not necessary. This practice, however, has long since been given up, and scarcely any person, who is not of an age to learn, is now admitted to this sacrament. For this reason, a knowledge of the principal truths of our religion is required; that is, a knowledge regarding the Apostles' Creed, the commandments, the sacraments, particularly the sacrament which we are about to receive, the Lord's Prayer, and the Hail Mary. A person who does not know these things should not be admitted to confirmation. A person who is about to receive a sacrament cannot be too well instructed. He who, through his own fault, has not sufficient knowledge of the Christian doctrine, exposes himself to great danger.

To thorough instruction in the Christian doctrine and to a good confession, should be added fervent prayer, as a special preparation for confirmation. The apostles spent nine days in fervent prayer, to prepare themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost. From Ascension-day to Pentecost, "they were persevering with one mind in prayer, with Mary, the mother of Jesus." (Acts i, 14.) Those, then, who are about to be confirmed, should imitate this example of the apostles. They should be more recollected and retired. They should often invite the Holy Ghost to come into their souls by the communication of his graces. For this purpose it would be well to repeat often a prayer or hymn to the Holy Ghost, like the following :—

HOLY SPIRIT.

Holy Spirit, pure and blest,
Come within our hearts and rest!
Come, with flame of burning love,
From above!

Bring us joy, for life is dreary,
Bring us peace, for life is weary;
Heal our weak hearts sad and sore,
Cleanse us ever more and more.
Come, O spotless, brooding Dove!
Fill our hearts with light and love!

While through life's dark vale we stray,
Lead us heavenward on our way;
Light us with the lamp of faith
Too in death.

In that hour of pain and sadness,
Fill our hearts with peace and gladness.
Teach our earthly hearts to pray,
Be our loving guest alway.
Grant us faith, and hope, and love,
Till we reign with thee above!

They should ardently desire and earnestly implore the fulness of those strengthening graces which confirmation confers: for "your heavenly Father will give the good Spirit to them that ask him." (Luke xi, 18.)

Lastly, it used to be customary to receive this sacrament fasting. This, however, is not of obligation, and cannot be expected when the sacrament is administered in the afternoon. Being thus properly prepared for this sacrament, its recipients will receive by it such abundance of divine light and strength as will make them, as it were, lions most formidable to all the enemies of their salvation.

Those, however, who, for want of proper preparation, receive confirmation unworthily, so far from receiving any benefit by it, become still more sinful than they had been before, for they add to their former guilt the horrid crime of sacrilege. Instead of being filled with the Holy Ghost and his seven-fold gifts, they will be filled with the spirit of darkness, who takes possession of them and exercises over them a tyrannical sway. It is true, the character of the sacrament will be impressed upon their souls; but, as they received it in the state of mortal sin, this same mark will continue with them as a token of disgrace, as a sign that they are rebels and deserters from the camp of Jesus Christ; and if they repent not of their sacrilege and confess it before death, the indelible mark impressed upon their souls by confirmation will be to them a perpetual reproach among the damned, and an additional torture when suffering the torments of hell. The grace of this sacrament, however, is bestowed upon them as soon as the obstacle to it is removed, that is, as soon as they truly repent of their sins and confess them properly.

9. Why are sponsors, or godfathers and godmothers, admitted also in confirmation?

That they may present to the bishop those who are to be confirmed, and afterward assist them in leading a Christian life.

The Church requires that there should be a sponsor for him who is to be confirmed. It is his duty to present to the bishop the person to be confirmed, and afterward, as far as possible, assist him in leading a Christian life. While the sacrament is being conferred, the sponsor keeps his right hand on the right shoulder of the person who receives the sacrament. This sponsor contracts a spiritual relationship in the same manner as a sponsor for baptism. It should be remembered that monks and nuns are forbidden to become sponsors.

10. Who may be sponsors of those who are to be confirmed?

Only good Catholics, who have been themselves confirmed; but the sponsor in baptism should not be the sponsor in confirmation.

Our dear Lord tells us, in the Gospel, that no man expects to "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles . . . good fruit of a bad tree." (Matt. vii, 16, 17.) In like manner, we cannot expect that a bad Catholic should assist his fellow-man in leading a good life. A bad Catholic, therefore, is not fit to become a sponsor for one who is to be baptized or confirmed. No one will intrust money to a dishonest man. And will parents be foolish enough to have unfaithful Catholics for sponsors of their children? It is, then, their duty to appoint as sponsors for their children only practical Catholics, who, by their exhortations and good examples, are able to lead their godchildren to true piety and godliness. It is to be observed that, in confirmation, there can be but one sponsor, who himself must have been confirmed, must be of the same sex as the person to be confirmed, and must not have been sponsor in baptism for the person to be confirmed.

Let us thank Almighty God for the grace of being members of the holy Roman Catholic Church. She alone is the great dwelling which the Holy Ghost enlightens and inflames with the fire of his love. She alone is the only vessel whose sails are filled with divine truths of the Holy Spirit. She alone is the one and only Spouse to whom Jesus Christ has sent the Paraclete. She alone is the only assembly gathered together in his name, and assisted by the presence of his Holy Spirit. Over her, as over the humanity of the Saviour, the heavens are opened, and the celestial dove, the Holy Ghost, extends his wings. She alone is that body, of which the Holy Ghost is the soul. All the healthy members of that body, although differently employed, receive life from this soul. The soul gives life to all the members, sees by the eyes, hears by the ears, speaks by the tongue, works by the hands, walks by the feet, and enables every member to fulfil its own office. Their offices are different, their life common. So is it with the Church of God. Some of her members work miracles, others preach the gospel, others preserve a virgin life, others, conjugal chastity. Each one fulfils his proper functions. All have a common life,—the life and grace of the Holy Ghost. In the bosom of the Church alone we become the temples of the Holy Spirit, the sanctuaries of his gifts, —sanctuaries worthy of the utmost veneration as long as sin has not driven charity therefrom.

How sacred, then, are those temples of our bodies, if mortal sin—that hideous monster!—never fills them with abomination and desolation! Our bodies are, indeed, true sanctuaries, and the soul is the tabernacle and altar thereof. There everything has been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit, everything has been sanctified by the Church. There everything ought to be as chaste, as pure, as holy and as sacred as the altar, as the tabernacle of our churches, as the very chalice in which reposes the God of all sanctity. "Be holy . . . be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Now, if the sacrament of confirmation is the fertile source whence so many blessings at once spring in the soul, is there any one who will not esteem and love it, who will not desire it, who will not be enchanted with the greatness and dignity of this divine sacrament, who will not regard the grace of the presence of the Holy Ghost as the only object deserving the attention and most ardent pursuit of his heart? What are all other things without this grace? Thrones, crowns, sceptres, all dwindle into their original nothing, but with this grace they are all dignified, all be come great. Look upon a poor, abandoned man, covered with rags, who in the eyes of men is an object of contempt, or, at best, of compassion. Contemptible, however, as he may seem, if he is a temple of the Holy Ghost, he is greater in the sight of God than all the sovereigns of this world when deprived of the presence of this divine guest.

Do we wish to see a convincing proof and a truly striking example of this truth? Where shall we find one? Not at present in the palaces of the great ones, not on the thrones of kings, not at the head of armies amidst conquerors, but on the gridiron of a martyr, on the sick-bed of a holy confessor or a holy virgin. Hast thou considered that martyr, that confessor, that virgin consecrated to my service? says the Lord, with a species of complacency. Yes, Lord, we have seen them. But in what condition? Torn to pieces, burnt alive, covered with filthy ulcers, devoured alive by vermin. Ah! nevertheless, says the Lord, those victims, apparently smitten by heaven, are the favorites of my heart, the objects of my complacency, the subjects of my triumphs. Through the midst of the clouds which encompass them, I see dart forth the rays of the light of the Holy Ghost who lives in them. At the sight of this light of grace the place itself where that martyr or confessor or virgin is suffering, becomes a kind of altar erected in my honor. The fire that torments them, the worms that crawl over them, are the ministers of my mercy rather than of my anger. They are precious victims offered to me as holocausts. I receive them from the hands of the Holy Ghost. Go, then, and contemplate the great ones in their palaces, the rich surrounded by their earthly glory and splendor: if they are not the temples of the Holy Ghost, I know them not; or, if I know them, it is only to say one day to them, "Depart from me, ye accursed, into fire everlasting."

We should, then, most carefully preserve the grace of the presence of the Holy Ghost, since this grace is to us the most necessary of all things. What would all other things avail us without this grace, and, if we possess it, what can they all add to our happiness? What have not the saints done and suffered to regain or to preserve this grace? What drew the hermits and anchorites into the desert, and buried them alive in dens and caves? Ah! they answer, we had a treasure intrusted to us, which we held in earthen vessels. We felt convinced that the closest retirement could not be too secure a shelter for us. What prevailed on those wan and emaciated penitents to use such severity to themselves? The air reëchoed with their sighs, the earth was watered by their tears. Ah! they cry to us, from the shelter of their retirement: We knew the price of the grace of God's holy presence, and we were afraid of our own frailty. Above all, what animated those invincible champions of our holy faith, the glorious martyrs, to mount the scaffold with cheerfulness and cling to the flaming stake? Their members were torn to pieces, and the earth streamed with their blood. The voice itself of their blood answers: We die, we die, with joy, nay, we would give a thousand lives, to preserve the life of grace. To live in it is to possess God here below, and to die in it is to enjoy him for all eternity.

EXTREME UNCTION.

THERE are many nowadays who view death merely as the dissolution of organs, the decomposition of a worn-out machine, as the extinction of the powers of life; in other words, they examine it simply with the eye of an infidel physician. It is not at all strange that these people should be insensible to the high moral grandeur which so often distinguishes the closing scene of mortal life, or that they should be surprised and offended at the importance which religion ascribes to this last act in the combat of her children. But far is it from the humble followers of a crucified Saviour to profess a scorn for death, which he himself condescended to endure. Death is disarmed, it is true; it is vanquished; yet its aspect still bespeaks its origin, and the eye naturally turns from it in mourning. "Perhaps you do not know," says St. Leonard, "what sort of grace it is to die a happy death. It is such a grace, that the greatest saints never thought it was their due for anything they had done for God. Even if God had denied a happy death to his own Mother, he would have done her no wrong, for it is a grace so great that no one can merit it. Though all angels and men should unite their power to give us a just knowledge of the importance of a good or a bad death, it would be impossible for them to do so, because they themselves cannot adequately comprehend the good or the evil resulting from a good or a bad death."

Death is the end of all our works, of our earthly pilgrimage,—the harbor where we cast anchor, or are wrecked forever. On death depends eternity : eternal happiness or eternal misery is its necessary result. If we die well, we shall be saved eternally ; if we die ill, we shall be eternally lost. We can die but once. Hence the infinite importance of this final act of our life. Yes, the day of death is the master-day,—the day that judges all the others. It is for this reason that this crisis naturally impresses every one with a feeling of awe. The pinched and pallid features, the cold and clammy skin, the heaving, laborious, rattling respiration, and the irresistible force of that disease which no earthly remedies can overcome, speak of something appalling, and suggest the idea of an almighty power manifesting displeasure and inflicting punishment.

What especially increases the sufferings of the dying is their remorse for sin committed, their dread of the approaching judgment, and the uncertainty of eternal salvation. At that moment especially, the devil puts forth all his power to gain the soul that is passing into eternity, knowing that the time is short in which he may win her, and that, if he lose her then, he has lost her forever. For this reason it is that the devil, who has always tempted her in life, will not be satisfied to tempt her alone in death, but calls companions to his aid. When any one is at the point of death, his house is filled with demons, who unite to accomplish his ruin. It is related of St. Andrew Avellino that, at the time of his death, several hundred devils came to tempt him ; and we read that, at the time of his agony, he had so fierce a struggle with hell, as to cause all his good brethren in religion who were present to tremble.

Now, the path which we are pursuing leads us necessarily within view of death ; this angel of destruction gains upon us more and more every day, and he comes upon many, too often, unawares. Happy are those who are always prepared to follow his summons. He has two keys in his hands; with the one he opens heaven for the good, and with the other he opens the gates of hell for the bad. The greatest gain, therefore, in this life, is to prepare ourselves every day for a happy death. Now, to prepare more proximately for a happy death, it is necessary for the dying Christian that he should have in his power a means that enables him to look calmly into the face of death,—a means which may assuage his bodily and mental sufferings, which may even delay death, should such delay be for the benefit of his soul and the glory of God. The dying Christian needs a means which confers upon him an extraordinary grace to remedy the ills of his soul, and efface in it the remaining stains of sin.

Now, during his life, Jesus Christ was the comforter of the sick and the afflicted. For them he showed more than a mother's compassion. For them he wrought most of his miracles. "I will come," said he to the centurion, "and heal thy servant." (Matt. viii, 7.) "He went about," says the Evangelist, "doing good, and healing all that were suffering." (Matt. xi, 5.) What, then, more natural than that this tender compassion of our Saviour should even be far greater for that class of the afflicted who are in danger of death by sickness? He himself experienced the pangs of death, when dying upon the cross; and in his agony he wished to be comforted by an angel from heaven. He, therefore, who understands our last needs better than we do ourselves, did not wish to leave this world without having provided a remedy for these needs. Hence, "as, in the other sacraments, he prepared the greatest aids whereby, during life, Christians might preserve themselves quite free from every grievous evil, so did he guard the close of life by the sacrament of extreme unction, as with a most firm defence." (Council of Trent, Sess. xiv, De Extr. Unct.)

1. What is extreme unction?

Extreme unction is a sacrament instituted for the spiritual strength and comfort of the sick.

Extreme unction means the last anointing. There are several occasions in which the anointing is performed as a sign of spiritual benefits conferred upon the soul. Thus, in baptism, the baptized person is anointed immediately before and after the essential part of this sacrament. Thus, again, the anointing with oil is done in the administration of the sacraments of confirmation and holy orders. But all these anointings precede extreme unction, and therefore the name, "the last anointing," is given to this sacrament.

Another reason why it is so called may be, because it is administered to the faithful only when they are laboring under some bodily infirmity, which warns them that they may have nearly reached the *extreme* term of life. Hence it is called by the Council of Trent, "the anointing of the sick," and "the sacrament of the dying."

Now this "last anointing" is a true and real sacrament of the New Law:—

1. It has the outward sign of a sacrament, which consists in the anointing with oil, accompanied by the words: "By this holy anointing, and of his own tender mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatever thou hast committed by thy sight, hearing," and so of the other senses.

2. It has the promise of grace, as we learn from the Epistle of St. James: "Is any man sick among you?

Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up; *and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.*" (Chap. v, 14, 15.)

3. This sacrament must have been instituted by Jesus Christ; for God alone can attach to an outward rite the power of forgiving sin and of giving inward grace.

The matter of extreme unction is oil of olives blessed by a Catholic bishop, and the form are the words used by the priest, while anointing the sick person: "By this holy anointing, and of his own most tender mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatever thou hast committed by thy sight," etc. The words of St. James sufficiently indicate this form, for he says: "And let them pray over him, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man." This particular form, so different from that of every other sacrament, has always been used in the Catholic Church since the beginning of Christianity, for the reason that, as St. Thomas Aquinas says, this sacrament confers both divine grace upon the soul, and gives bodily relief to the sick. Hence, the form of this sacrament is supplicatory, for the priest implores the mercy and grace of God for the eternal salvation of the sick person's soul, and the restoration of his health at the same time, if agreeable to Almighty God to grant it for some particular reason. All who are present join the priest in fervent prayers, most ardently supplicating the Lord of mercy for the life and salvation of the sick person.

This holy sacrament, therefore, is of divine institution, clearly announced by St. James, sanctioned by General Councils, and by the unanimous testimony of all the fathers of the Church, who declare it rank heresy for any one to doubt that this sacrament is divinely instituted, that it confers grace, remits sins, and comforts the sick. (Council of Trent.)

2. How is extreme unction administered?

The priest anoints the senses of the body with holy oil, saying: "Through this holy unction, and his most tender mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatever sins thou hast committed by thy sight, by thy hearing," etc.

According to the Roman Ritual, the priest, on entering the chamber of the sick person, greets him by saying: "Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell therein." Then, being vested in a surplice and a violet stole, he first presents the cross to be kissed by the sick person, who thus declares his faith and his hope in Jesus Christ crucified. Then he sprinkles with holy-water the sick person, the room, and all who are present, saying the usual antiphon, "*Asperges me*," etc. Then the priest hears the confession of the sick person, says a few words to console and encourage him, and, if time permits, explains briefly the advantages and effects of the sacrament. After this, he says several prayers.

There is, indeed, no sacrament the administration of which is accompanied with more prayers; and with good reason, for then, most particularly, the faithful require the assistance of pious prayers, and therefore all who may be present should pour out their fervent aspirations to God in behalf of the sick person, most earnestly recommending his life and salvation to the divine mercy. The prayers especially recommended are the Penitential Psalms and the Litanies, these being most appropriate; but any others, suitable for the persons present,—for instance, the Rosary,—may be selected. Those who are in the room and recite the Litanies, instead of saying, "Pray for us," should say, "Pray for him," or "for her," if the sick person is a woman.

I here add the prayers which accompany the administration of the sacrament of extreme unction, in order that it may be seen how earnestly Almighty God is besought in them to grant to the sick person health of body as well as of soul.

Prayers Accompanying the Administration of Extreme Unction.

"Let there enter, O Lord Jesus Christ! into this house everlasting felicity, divine prosperity, serene gladness, fruitful charity, perpetual health. Let the approach of devils flee from this place, let the angels of peace be present, and let all malignant discord depart from this house. Magnify, O Lord! upon us thy holy name, and bless our holy conversation. Sanctify the entrance of our humility, who art holy and good, and abidest with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen.

"Let us pray and beseech our Lord Jesus Christ that he may bless this tabernacle and all who dwell therein, and give them a good angel for a guardian and make them serve him, that they may consider the wonderful things of his law. May he avert from them all adverse powers; may he deliver them from all fear and from all disquiet, and vouchsafe to keep them in health in this tabernacle. Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth God, for ever and ever. Amen.

"Hear us, O holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God! and vouchsafe to send thy holy angel from heaven to guard, cherish, protect, visit, and defend all that dwell in this house. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Then the sick person, or the assistant of the priest in his name, repeats the general confession of sins. The pastor responds by the following invocations accompanied by his benediction:—

"Almighty God have mercy upon thee, forgive thee all thy sins, and bring thee to everlasting life. Amen.

"The almighty and merciful God grant thee pardon, absolution, and remission of all thy sins. Amen."

Then, after exhorting all who are present to join in prayer, addressing himself more particularly to the sick person, he says:—

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: may all power of the devil be extinguished in thee, by the imposition of our hands, and by the invocation of all the holy angels, archangels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the saints. Amen."

Then anointing him with holy oil on the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the hands, and the feet, he says:—

"Through this holy unction, and through his most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by seeing . . . hearing . . . smelling . . . taste and speech . . . touch . . . walking. Amen." At the end of each holy anointing the sick person might answer, Amen.

After other prayers he concludes thus:—

"Lord God Almighty, who hast spoken by thine Apostle James, saying: 'Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man. And the Lord shall raise him up: and, if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him,'—cure, we beseech thee, O our Redeemer! by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the languors of this sick man; heal his wounds, and forgive his sins; drive out from him all pains of body and mind, and mercifully restore to him full health, inwardly and outwardly, that, being recovered by the help of thy mercy, he may return to his former duties. Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

"Look down, O Lord! we beseech thee, upon thy servant, N., fainting in the infirmity of his body, and refresh the soul which thou hast created, that, being amended by chastisements, he may feel himself saved by thy medicine. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

"O holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, who, by pouring the grace of thy blessing upon sick bodies, dost preserve, by thy manifold goodness, the work of thy hands! graciously draw near at the invocation of thy name, that, delivering thy servant from sickness, and bestowing health upon him, thou mayst raise him up by thy right hand, strengthen him by thy might, defend him by thy power, and restore him to thy holy Church, with all desired prosperity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Any sick person who knows these prayers of the Church, instead of fearing to receive extreme unction, will rather feel very desirous to be anointed as soon as possible.

All the parts or members of the body are not anointed, but only those which serve as the natural instruments to the five principal senses. Hence the eyes are anointed, because they are the organs of sight; the ears, because they are the organs of hearing; the nostrils, because they are the organs of smelling; the mouth, because it is the organ of taste and speech; the hands, because they are the organs of touch. True, the sense of touch is diffused alike throughout the body, but the hands are its principal seat. Although only these parts are anointed, yet extreme unction, by its spiritual effects, is communicated to the whole body. The Catholic Church faithfully observes this practice in anointing the sick, and it admirably suits the medicinal nature of this sacrament, which is given as a spiritual remedy.

As in corporal infirmity, although it affects the whole body, the cure is applied to that part only which is the source and orgin of the disease; so is this sacrament applied, not to the entire body, but only to those members which are principally the organs of sense.

3. When are we obliged to receive extreme unction?

When we are in danger of death by sickness; for the Apostle St. James writes: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up: and, if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (*Chap. v*, 14, 15.)

Extreme unction cannot be given to all persons in danger of death. It is given only to those who are in danger of death by sickness. The words of St. James imply that the person is laboring under a dangerous illness. Such is their usual acceptation, and so they are interpreted by the unanimous consent of theologians. Hence its administration to one in sound health, or to one but slightly indisposed, would be illicit and invalid.

It is enough, however, that a person is prudently considered, from apparent symptoms, to be in danger, even though the danger does not actually exist. As soon, then, as a person can be prudently pronounced to be in danger of death from sickness, even though the danger is not proximate, even though there is a hope of recovery, the sacrament may be administered.

This sacrament should also be administered to those who are sinking from old age, although they may have no other infirmity; for old age is, in itself, an infirmity sufficiently indicated in the words of St. James the Apostle. It is, then, not enough that the subject of extreme unction should be in danger of death, or even certain of suffering death, by violence or from any external cause. Hence it cannot be administered to soldiers entering the field of battle, to persons undertaking a perilous voyage or journey, or to criminals who are about to be executed. But if any of these has already suffered what is sufficient to cause death: if a soldier, for instance, is mortally wounded; or if a criminal, after hearing his sentence, gets into a fever, or if he is mortally injured by a fall from the scaffold, or if, being condemned to die by slow torture, he has already suffered enough to cause death,—in any such case extreme unction may be administered if there be an opportunity, because there is then a dangerous ailment actually affecting the body. (O'Kane's "Rubrics.")

All those who die impenitent, or in the actual commission of sin—as a man shot in a duel, or a drunken man wounded, and dying in his drunkenness—cannot receive this sacrament, unless there is some good reason to think that, at the moment of death, they feel sorry for their sins. Children, before they have come to the use of reason, and idiots and insane persons who *never* had the use of reason, cannot receive this sacrament; because, as they have never sinned, nor have any *remains* of sin, and not being liable to any temptations to sin, they are incapable of receiving any effects from it.

As to the administration of extreme unction to children, Benedict XIV lays it down as a principle that, when children are considered capable of receiving the sacrament of penance, they may also be considered capable of receiving extreme unction. When it is doubted, says St. Alphonsus, whether a child has attained the use of reason, the sacrament should be conferred conditionally.

One of our fathers told me that, one day, in 1852, a young man came and asked him whether it was necessary that a priest should come and anoint his dying twin sisters. "They are only six years old," said he, "and the doctor declares that they can live but a few hours. Their mother told them that they would soon die and go to heaven." "No, no! ma," said one of them, "not to heaven, but to hell. We are bad children." "Ma," said the other, "can't we have the priest? He will forgive us, and then we shall not go to hell." On hearing this, I told the boy the case was clear. These children must have the priest. So one of our fathers went to see them, and finding them sufficiently instructed, he heard their confession and anointed them. After receiving extreme unction, the children said: "Ma, now we are no longer afraid of Almighty God. We are quite well again." Then they told their mother that, whilst all the house were at church, they did something bad; but that they had told all to the priest, who had forgiven them. "O ma!" they exclaimed, "we will never do it again." The good mother shed tears, embraced her darlings, and dressed them, for they were quite cured.

In 1868, many people died of cholera in the city of St. Louis. A little Catholic boy of seven years seemed to be destined to become also a victim of the epidemic. According to the declaration of the physician, he was beyond all hope of recovery. He then begged his mother to send for the priest: "For," said he, "we were told by him that, when dangerously sick, we are obliged to send for a priest." Thereupon the boy's father came and asked one of our fathers whether it was necessary that his little boy should be anointed. "Certainly," said he; "he has as much right to the blessings of extreme unction as you and I have. It is my duty to go and anoint him." The poor boy looked more like a dead than a living person. The father assisted him to make his confession, and then asked him whether he wished to be anointed. He made a sign that he wished, and, when asked whether he knew what extreme unction was, he replied: "Yes, extreme unction gives us grace to die a happy death." "But if you do not die?" said the father. "Then it will cure me," said he. "Yes, my child," said the priest; "put then all your trust in God, and pray to Jesus and Mary whilst I anoint you." He began to pray: "Jesus, have mercy on me! Mary, my mother, pray for me!" No sooner had he received extreme unction than he felt better. An hour after, he was playing in the street, and next morning he went to church to thank God for his recovery.

4. Is extreme unction necessary to salvation?

Extreme unction is not absolutely necessary to salvation, yet it would be a great sin not to receive it, through neglect or indifference.

On the part of God there is, of course, no absolute necessity to save us by means of extreme unction; for, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, he could save us in many other ways. But there is a relative necessity on our part to receive this sacrament as a means of salvation especially instituted for the spiritual welfare of the dying. Not to use this means from neglect or indifference, would undoubtedly be very offensive to Almighty God, and contrary to the infallible decrees of his divine providence, which bountifully provides for our temporal and spiritual wants, and which has also provided a great means of our salvation by the institution of the sacrament of extreme unction.

One day, a certain traveller was told by a good friend to provide himself with proper weapons to defend himself against the savages who, toward the end of his journey, would try to rob him of all the wealth which he had amassed, and even kill him. The traveller paid no attention to this charitable warning of his friend. The consequence was that he did not reach the place of his destiny. He was attacked by the savages, and, not being provided with weapons to defend himself, he was killed at a short distance from his home.

There are many Catholics who resemble this traveller. Like him, they are told by the priest to provide themselves with proper weapons to defend themselves against the evil spirits, who, toward the end of their earthly pilgrimage, will try all in their power to rob them of all their good works, and even of the life of their soul, which is the grace of God, by making them despair of salvation. They are told that these weapons are furnished them in the sacrament of extreme unction, and that, on this account, they should receive it in due time. But, as they pay but little attention to this warning, they neglect to receive this sacrament, and, on this account, many a one is lost, who, had he received it, would have been saved.

There is a sick person. He knows that he is in the state of mortal sin. But he is not able to confess and to receive absolution. However, he has attrition, or imperfect sorrow, for his sins. Although attrition alone is not sufficient to obtain forgiveness from God, yet it is sufficient to receive the sacrament of extreme unction worthily, and by it the forgiveness of his sins and sanctifying grace. Hence, if he wishes to be saved, he is obliged to receive this sacrament. If he dies without it, he will be lost forever.

There is another. He suffers most violent temptations against faith and hope. He has neglected to send for the priest to anoint him. He feels himself too weak to resist these temptations. He dies in sin, and he is lost,—lost through his own fault, because, by neglecting to receive extreme unction, he wilfully deprived himself of the great help which God grants, in this sacrament, to the dying to enable them to overcome the temptations of the devil. Hence St. Alphonsus and other theologians say that a sick person, who refuses at the hour of death to be anointed, can scarcely be excused from grievous sin, because he wilfully deprives himself of the great graces which this sacrament gives to dying persons, in order that they may be enabled to resist the great temptations with which the devil assails them in the hour of death.

There is another. He has neglected his Christian duties for many years. His last day, the day of his departure from this world, is at hand. What sign of return, what final evidence of obedience, shall this prodigal give to God and to men? At this decisive hour it is important for the Christian to know whether he is dying in peace with the Church, his mother; and it is also important for the Church to know whether this one of her children, alienated so long from her, returns to die in her bosom. To give this mutual assurance, it is necessary that there should be a last tie to unite the mother to the child and the child to the mother, the penitent to the Saviour, and the dying man to the life of eternity. Jesus Christ provided this sacred tie in the institution of extreme unction. It is therefore necessary for such a prodigal to receive this sacrament, that he may be sure of being reconciled to God and his Church, and in order to die in peace.

5. What grace does the sick person receive in extreme unction?

Extreme unction remits: 1, *sin and its effects;* 2, *it fills the soul with confidence in God's mercy, and strengthens it against temptation;* 3, *it often restores health.*

Extreme unction has been instituted by our Lord as a celestial medicine for the health, not only of the soul, but of the body also. It produces, therefore, like each of the other sacraments, certain effects peculiar to itself. These effects are:—

1. Extreme unction cleanses the soul from venial sin, and also from the unknown mortal sins which have not been remitted in any other way, provided, however, that the sick person is truly sorry for his sins; that is, has, at least, attrition for them. It may happen, from some cause or other, that a sick person is in the state of mortal sin without being aware of it. In this case, extreme unction, if received at least with attrition, restores the sick person to the state of grace. Again, it may happen that a sick person, after having received absolution, falls into mortal sin, and then repents of it with real attrition and wishes to confess it, but, through speechlessness or insensibility, is unable to confess it. Now, if he is anointed, this sin is remitted by this sacrament. That extreme unction produces this effect, is clear from the words of St. James:

"If he be in sins," says this apostle, "they shall be forgiven him."

2. Extreme unction takes away the remains of sin. By the remains of sin we mean: 1. The evil dispositions left by the sins which have already been forgiven; for example, difficulty in doing good, tendency to fall back into former guilt, affection for the things of this world, darkness of the understanding, hardness of heart. 2. Interior perplexity, fear, and anguish, caused by the remembrance of past sins and the terrors of the particular judgment, and the uncertainty of the final decision of the eternal Judge. Now, extreme unction removes these remains. It quiets the fear of the sick person; it dispels the gloom in which his soul is enveloped; it fills it with pious and holy joy, and enables it to await with cheerfulness the coming of the Lord, prepared to give up all it has received from his bounty whenever he is pleased to summon it from this world of corruption. 3. By remains of sin we understand also the temporal punishments due to sin. Extreme unction cancels also these punishments, either wholly or in part, according to the good dispositions with which it is received.

3. Like the other sacraments of the living, it increases habitual grace, to which corresponds a higher degree of everlasting happiness and glory in heaven. Suppose that there are two sick persons, who, before receiving extreme unction, are equal in merits and grace, and, consequently, are entitled to the same reward in heaven. Now, it happens that one of them dies without having been anointed, whilst the other had the happiness to receive extreme unction before his departure from this world. In consequence of this sacrament, the latter will be higher than the former in glory, and enjoy greater happiness in heaven for all eternity.

4. Extreme unction confers upon the sick person what is called a peculiar sacramental grace, which entitles him to such actual graces as enable him to endure with patience and resignation the sufferings to which he is subject, and to resist the temptations which beset him in his last hour. We can understand the answer of a Protestant minister to a lady who had a strong desire to become a Catholic: "Madam, if you wish to live at your ease, remain a Protestant; but if you wish to die in peace, become a Catholic." "I am happy, general," said Napoleon, one day, to one of his faithful generals. It was not after a great victory, or his coronation by the pope, or some other great event in his life, that the Emperor of the French spoke thus; no, it was just after having received extreme unction that he exclaimed: "I am happy, general, that I have fulfilled my duties. . . . I wish you the same happiness at your death. . . . I needed it indeed," etc. (Chevalier de Beauterne, ch. ix.)

5. Finally, the recovery of health, if profitable to the sick person, is another effect of extreme unction. The body, borne down by sickness, obtains relief. The patient, oppressed by the weight of his sufferings, finds them alleviated. Many priests can attest from experience this alleviation. This sensible improvement which the sick person experiences, is, in many respects, useful for the salvation of his soul. But, besides, the sick person, by virtue of this sacrament, at times obtains bodily health, when expedient for the welfare of the soul. When and how far it is expedient in any particular case, can be known only to God. But it is not implied that one, who is restored to health by virtue of this sacrament, will persevere and be saved; or that one, who is not so restored, would not acquire greater merit and

a higher degree of glory, if he were permitted to live longer. The nature of the resulting spiritual advantage on which the restoration of bodily health depends, is altogether determined by the order of God's wisdom and providence, and does not necessarily imply final perseverance. Of old, the administration of extreme unction was attended by many miraculous cures. If these miraculous cures have become less frequent since the Church was firmly established, we are not to suppose that, even in old times, all the sick who received extreme unction were cured. What remains at this day, what will always remain and will never deceive us, is the virtue for curing souls that are properly disposed, —a virtue that takes away sin and the remains of sin, fills the soul with confidence, joy, and spiritual consolation, and terrifies Satan by the irresistible power of faith, hope, and charity. However, it may be well to observe here that, in many cases, bodily health is not granted through this sacrament, either from weakness of faith in the receiver or in the minister, or because it is administered too late. (Catech. of Council of Trent.)

6. What is necessary for a sick person that he may receive the graces of this sacrament?

1, *To receive it in due time; 2, to make a good confession, or at least an act of contrition.*

1. To receive the great blessings of extreme unction, we must receive it in due time. When Jesus Christ was living on earth, some people came to him and told him that Lazarus was sick. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he called him his friend. He said to his apostles: "Let us go to him." When Jesus knows that a Christian is sick and dying, he will call him his friend, and he will say to his angels: Let us go to him. A sick person, therefore,

should endeavor to receive the last sacraments in due time, when he is as yet able to prepare himself for their worthy reception. It is obvious that, if administered whilst the mental faculties are yet unimpaired, and the sick person can bring to their reception sentiments of faith and devotion, this circumstance must contribute very much to enable him to partake more abundantly of the grace of the sacraments.

Many people entertain the senseless fear that to receive extreme unction is to be cut off from all hope of recovery. Hence they put off the reception of this sacrament to the last moment. However, it cannot be doubted that miraculous cures are sometimes effected by extreme unction, if it is received in due time.

One of our fathers related to me the following miraculous cures:—"When I lived," said he, "in Baltimore, in 1846, I was one day called by a Protestant to a German Catholic, who was very sick. The physician said that the patient could not live over an hour. So I anointed him in the presence of his Protestant friend. No sooner was he anointed than he sat up in his bed, declaring that he was cured. He got up, dressed himself, and went to work next morning. His Protestant friend, on witnessing this sudden cure, exclaimed: 'Now I have seen with my own eyes the goodness and power of God manifested in the anointing of the sick, which is so much ridiculed by our preachers. The Roman Catholic Church is truly God's Church. I wish to become a Catholic.' He came regularly to instructions, and was at last received into the Church.

"In 1849, a good Catholic young man in Baltimore was taken with cholera-morbus. The physician who attended him was an infidel. By repeated small doses of ether he tried to keep up the spark of life in his patient. When I entered the room, the young man expressed a desire to make his confession. The doctor objected to it, saying that he would die in less than ten minutes. As the parents of the young man were practical Catholics, they wished that their son should receive the last sacraments. The doctor retired to the next room whilst I heard the young man's confession. After this, the doctor came in again; and when he saw that I prepared to administer the holy viaticum to his patient, he declared that it could not be given, as his patient was too weak to swallow anything. But, as this good young man ardently desired to receive holy communion, I gave it to him, and our dear Lord enabled him to swallow it, to the great astonishment of the physician. I then proceeded to anoint him. The doctor begged me not to do it, 'for, you see,' said he, 'that life is ebbing upon his lips.' 'Doctor,' I said, 'extreme unction has been instituted by Jesus Christ for the health of the body as well as for that of the soul.' Whilst I anointed the dying young man, the doctor watched and supported him. His eyes, whose life seemed to be almost extinct, began to become brighter and to look natural again, his pinched cheeks and nostrils dilated, his cold hands and feet became warm. The doctor ceased to support his patient. All on a sudden, the young man exclaimed: 'Mother, I am well again. I wish to get up.' Imagine the astonishment of the doctor! He came and shook hands with me, saying: 'Father, I did not cure this boy, but you did.' 'Oh no, doctor,' said I; 'it is God who has cured him by means of extreme unction.' Two days after, the doctor came and made a good confession. He had his children baptized in the Catholic Church, and his wife also became a Catholic.

"In 1850, I was attached to our church, in Monroe, Michigan. One day I was called to a farmer, who was in the last stage of consumption. The three best doctors of the neighborhood declared that medicine was no longer of any use to him, and that he would die within a few days. He was so weak that, whilst I heard his confession, I had to stop three times to let him rest a little to be able to breathe. As I had not brought with me the sacred oil, I went home again, and requested Father Steinbacher to go and administer the holy viaticum and extreme unction to the dying man. After having been anointed, he began to rally considerably. Next day being Sunday, the Catholics of the neighborhood gathered in the house of the sick man, where Father Steinbacher said Mass. Mass being over, the sick farmer exclaimed in a loud voice: 'Thanks be to God and to your reverence, I am well. No sooner was I anointed than I began to feel better.' He arose from his bed, and in the afternoon he was seen walking with his children in the garden. Three weeks after, I went again to the same place. As Father Steinbacher had only told me that he gave the last sacraments to the sick man, I thought the latter must be dead and buried. So I asked the people where they had buried Patrick W——? 'He is neither dead nor buried,' they answered; 'there he stands behind you, the picture of health and strength.' That morning he had walked, fasting, seven miles over a rough and muddy country-road to receive holy communion at Mass."

Now, these beneficial effects on bodily health which extreme unction generally exercises, are produced in an indirect way. The grace of the sacrament soothes the soul, lessens the fear of death, and brings on such calm and peace of mind as often to lead to the restoration of health. If God be pleased to work a direct miracle, it is never too late for him to do so. But if the sacrament is to act as a natural remedy, indirectly restoring health in the way just explained, it must be received in due time; otherwise, like ordinary remedies which are applied too late, it will not produce its effects. Hence, St. Alphonsus says that "when the sick person is in a state capable of being cured by natural means, the virtue of this sacrament will obtain for him bodily health, if his recovery is conducive to his spiritual welfare. From this we see how useful it is to receive extreme unction as soon as possible; that is, as soon as the physician declares the disease to be grave and dangerous to life, without waiting till there is no hope of recovery, because it is then impossible, in the natural course of things, for the sick person to recover."

Hence, when any one is in danger of death, it is a great cruelty and sin not to let him know it. If he knows it, he will prepare for death. If he does not know it, he will make no preparations, and perhaps his soul will be lost.

It is also an unpardonable fault in the relatives and friends of a sick person to have the cruelty to send for the priest when it is almost too late. The physician is sent for, soon after a person has become sick. The health of the body is cared for, far more than that of the soul. Thus it happens that many a sick person is disappointed of receiving the great blessings of extreme unction; the Church is deceived in preparing one of her children for a happy death, and the beneficent provisions of Christ's infinite love are frustrated.

St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, in Ireland, having entered the house of a lady of quality who was dangerously ill, in order to administer to her the sacrament of extreme unction, the people who were there were of opinion that he had better postpone the ceremony till next morning. The holy bishop acceded to their wishes and retired; but this poor woman died a little while after. St. Malachy was the more grieved at this, that he took all the blame to himself for having allowed her to die without receiving the last sacraments. He passed the whole night praying and weeping, so that the abundance of tears he shed on that occasion supplied, in some degree, to the dead the want of holy unction. Whilst he persevered in prayer with his disciples, the Lord rewarded his faith in a very extraordinary manner: the dead returned to life, like a person awaking from a deep sleep. She raised herself on her bed, recognized St. Malachy, who was praying, and saluted him respectfully. Immediately the sadness was changed into joy, and all who saw this miracle were amazed. But the holy bishop thanked and blessed the Lord; he anointed the resuscitated woman, well knowing, says St. Bernard, who relates this story, *that sins are forgiven in that sacrament, and that the prayer of faith saves the sick.* When the holy archbishop had repaired what he called his fault, he withdrew. The patient continued to grow better, and even recovered her health. She lived so for several days, as if to give time for every one to be convinced of the miracle. At length, when she had performed the penance which St. Malachy had imposed upon her in her last confession, she died a second time in the grace of the Lord. (*Vie de Saint Malachie*, chap. xxiv.)

From such a miracle we learn the importance of being prepared for a happy death by means of extreme unction. Indeed, a dying person wants help more than any one else. Will the dying person go to heaven or to hell? This depends very much on those who help him. If you want to do a good work, *help the dying.* What you do to the sick, you do to Jesus Christ himself: "I was sick, and you did visit me." (Matt. xxv.)

God let St. Philip Neri see those things which go on in the room of a dying person. No one else saw them except himself. St. Philip saw that God did great things for those who help the dying. He saw angels come from heaven to those who helped the dying, and put on their tongues the best words to say to the sick. St. Alphonsus says that to help the dying pleases God and saves souls more than anything else does. Fathers and mothers especially should take care of their children when dying: "If any one hath not care of his own household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v, 8.) In like manner, children should carefully help their dying parents.

The devil hates this good work.—Two priests, of the Order of St. Camillus, went to help a man who was dying in Rome. As soon as they came into the room of the dying person, they saw three devils. The devils looked most frightfully at them. Flashes of fire came out of the eyes of the devils. They wanted to frighten the two priests and make them go away. One of the priests made the sign of the cross. Then he sprinkled the holy-water on the place where he saw the devils standing. As soon as the holy-water had been sprinkled, the devils went away. They left behind a most frightful smell, like the smell of brimstone out of hell. Two other priests also went to help a person who was dying. They did all they could for the dying person. They then set off on their way home again. As they were going along the road, they saw a most frightful creature. It looked like a terrible cow. This cow seemed as if it was just going to jump on the priests and kill them. They were so frightened at what they saw, that they fell down on the ground. They called on Jesus and Mary to help them. As soon as they had said this prayer, they saw the terrible beast no more. It had gone back to hell.

2. In order to receive the graces of extreme unction, we should make a good confession, or, at least, an act of contrition, previously to its reception. Extreme unction is a sacrament of the living. Now, every sacrament of the living is instituted to increase sanctifying grace, and therefore requires the presence of this grace in the soul when it is received. Hence, if a sick person is conscious of a mortal sin, he is obliged by divine precept to make first, if possible, a good confession. If he had good reason to believe that, by making a good confession of all his sins, he would not have time enough to be anointed, he would not be justified in abridging his confession, or leaving it incomplete, in order to gain time to receive extreme unction. For, under the circumstances, the divine precept of confession is more strictly binding than that of being anointed. When the sick person cannot confess his sins, on account of speechlessness or some other cause, he should endeavor at least to make an act of perfect contrition, in order to receive the advantages of absolution, and to dispose himself, as far as possible, for the effects of extreme unction. Hence this sacrament is not ordinarily given until the sick person has received the sacraments of penance and the Blessed Eucharist. It may be well for a person who is dying to make a general confession of all the sins of his life, or at least to confess the greatest sins

of his life. Let him confess anything that troubles and disturbs him. Perhaps a person made bad confessions before. There is some great sin which he never told in confession before, because he was afraid to tell it. Let him remember that this is the last time he will be able to confess it. If he does not confess it now, his soul will be lost.

There is one thing which makes a good confession very easy for the dying. Why do people sometimes go to confession, and their sins are not forgiven? Because they are not willing to leave those things and those persons who lead them into sin. But, when a person is dying, he is obliged to leave them. So it is more easy for the dying to make a good confession.

After confession, the sick person, if possible, receives holy communion. When holy communion is given to the sick in danger of death, it is called the holy viaticum. The word viaticum means food for a journey. A dying person has a long journey to make. He has to go from this world into the next. It is a very dangerous journey. The devils know that it is their last chance of obtaining possession of his soul. Hence they lie in wait to ruin him in his passage out of this world. Jesus knows this, and he knows that his poor dying creature is now more helpless than ever. So Jesus comes himself to those who are dying, to give them strength against the devils. He gives them his own flesh and blood in the holy viaticum. When Jesus was on earth, he said these words: "I go to prepare a place for you (in heaven), but *I will come again* and take you to myself, that, where I am, you also may be." So, when we are dying, Jesus, with many angels, comes again in the holy viaticum, and takes us to heaven with him.

7. How often can extreme unction be received?

It can be received once in every dangerous illness.

Extreme unction, as we have seen, can be given only to those who are in danger of death by sickness. When once given, it cannot be given again, while the same danger lasts. However, it may be repeated as often as a person, having recovered from the danger, again falls into it, even during the same sickness. In an illness of very short duration, it is never administered a second time; for, in such a case, the recovery is either complete or merely apparent. Generally speaking, changes for the better take place in diseases of any duration, as consumption or dropsy. In one of these, a person, in manifest danger of death at present, may be over this danger in a few days, and be tolerably well for several weeks or months, although it is known that the disease still continues, and is even likely to end fatally. In such a case, when the disease takes another turn, and the person is again in similar danger, extreme unction may be again administered: for, though the disease is the same, the state of the disease is different.

However, in order to be allowed to repeat extreme unction during the same disease, it is not enough that the patient appears to be out of danger for a few days. There must be probable ground for believing that he is really out of danger, and there must, therefore, be an improvement that continues for a considerable time. As a real danger of death cannot, generally speaking, last for a month, the sacrament should, as a general rule, be given again to a person suffering from a tedious illness, if he lives stills a month after receiving extreme unction. ("Rubrics," by O'Kane.)

8. What things should be in the room of a sick person who is about to receive the sacraments?

Upon a table, covered with a white cloth, there should be holy-water and a crucifix, between two candles.

When the priest is coming to give the last sacrament to a dying person, the room should be put in proper order. Everything should be made neat. Things should not be lying about. There should be a table with a white cloth on it, a cross, two candlesticks and candles, holy-water, a glass of clean water, and a small white cloth for a communion-cloth. There is no cabin so poor that it may not be made clean, at least around the bed of the sick person; none in which a table with a clean white cover may not be prepared, at least by borrowing from some charitable neighbor. All this should be done out of respect and reverence for our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the person of the priest, enters the chamber of the sick man, when he comes to administer the last sacraments.

The priest, indeed, represents the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he administers the sacraments. He is invested with his power, and acts in his name and by his authority. Hence it is that the Apostle St. James says: "Let the sick man bring in the priests of the Church," etc. It is an article of faith that the Catholic priest alone can give extreme unction. Although any priest can validly administer this sacrament, yet the proper minister is the parish priest of the sick person, or one of his assistants. To show that the priest takes the place of our Lord Jesus Christ when he anoints the sick, our dear Saviour has often vouchsafed to be present at the administration of extreme unction.

As soon as the priest enters the room, all should kneel.

There should be no talking. If it is necessary to speak, then speak in a low voice. After the last sacraments have been given, the sick person should be left quiet to say his prayers, or to have them read to him if he cannot read them himself.

What acknowledgments of love and gratitude should we not incessantly manifest to the almighty and merciful Lord, who has given us every means necessary for our temporal and eternal happiness, and who, after having given us a new life by spiritual generation in baptism, has also instituted this holy sacrament to purify us at the end of our mortal career from all the defilements of the flesh and the world, and to prepare us for a glorious immortality!

St. Ludwina saw, whilst she was being anointed, our dear Saviour, his blessed Mother, the apostles, and a multitude of angels and saints, present. She begged our Lord to make her suffer her purgatory in this world, and our dear Saviour replied: "I will do so, my daughter. After two days you will sing alleluia with all the virgins in the kingdom of my Father." (Life by Surius—Apr. 7.)

It is related, in the life of Sister Mary Oignies, that she was admonished by the Blessed Virgin to be anointed. Whilst extreme unction was being given her, all the apostles were present, and St. Peter showed her the keys with which he would open for her the gates of heaven. Our dear Saviour, too, was present. He placed the cross, the sign of his victory, at her feet. Whilst the organs of sense were being anointed, she experienced, in a sensible manner, the operation of the Holy Ghost, manifesting itself by a wonderful light of glory. There were also present some of her deceased friends and relatives, who had been sent to console her.

When extreme unction was given to a sick person in her presence, she saw how our dear Saviour encouraged him, purified his soul, drove away the devils, and diffused a wonderful light through the whole body whilst the organs of sense were anointed. (Jacobus a Vitriaco Card., lib. ii Vitæ ejus.)

When death's dread hour is nigh,
When loved ones round me sigh,
When rise dark doubts and fears
Of vanished years;
When sad and sore-oppressed
I seek in vain for rest,
Be thy fond help then near:
Sweet Jesu, hear!

When o'er my couch of woe
God's priest is bending low,
With unction's blessed balm
Gives heavenly calm,
Blots out each dark offence,
Each guilty stain of sense,—
Ah, be thyself then near:
Sweet Jesu, hear!

When racked with pain and weak,
My lips refuse to speak,
May thy name ne'er depart
From my fond heart!
And when in death's repose
My weary eyelids close,
May they ope lovingly
Dear Lord, on thee!

HOLY ORDERS

This world is the temple of God's love. The green earth, with its thousands of flowers, is the carpeted floor. The clear blue sky above, with its millions of twinkling stars, is the vaulted dome. God created this temple for man, and in this temple he wished to stay with man to the end of time. In order to induce man to stay with him, he implanted in the human heart an insatiable craving for happiness, which haunts him through life, and pursues him even to the grave. This continual restlessness is the homesickness of the soul—its craving after the presence of God, who is the only source of all true happiness. Almighty God, who planted in the human heart this desire for the divine presence, found also means to satisfy this desire. He first revealed himself to man by creation. Although hidden in creation, he constantly speaks to man through his great works. An architect speaks to us through a beautiful building ; a painter, through a painting ; a writer, through a book. God speaks to men in like manner through the works of creation, which manifest his power, his wisdom, and divinity. The good and pure behold, indeed, God in creation, they see his power in the storm, in the cataract, in the earthquake. They see his wisdom in the laws that govern the boundless universe. They see his beauty in the flower, in the sunbeam, and in the many-tinted rainbow.

God, however, made use of a more perfect means to reveal to man his divine presence. This was his word.

If a friend visits us at night, and finds us sitting in the dark, he speaks; he makes use of words to show that he is really present. In like manner, God, wishing to reveal his real presence to man sitting in the darkness of this life, has addressed him in words. This is the very first article of faith. God spoke to our first parents in paradise; he spoke to the patriarchs and prophets, and finally, as St. Paul assures us, he has spoken, for the last time, by his only-begotten Son.

But merely to hear the voice of a friend is not enough for the human heart: it longs for something more; the eyes yearn to look upon him. God knows this want of the human heart, and he has satisfied it. The prophets besought him again and again to show himself: "Show us thy face, O Lord! and we shall be saved." This, too, was the ardent prayer of Moses: "O Lord! show me thy glory." (Exod. xxxiii, 13.)

In the Old Law God satisfied this desire, by manifesting his presence to the Israelites under the form of a cloud and a pillar of fire. He next commanded an ark or tabernacle to be made, and there he manifested his presence by a peculiar, supernatural light, called the Shekinah. But all this satisfied neither man's heart, nor God's unbounded love. If we love a person dearly, it is not enough for us to hear his voice, or to see him in disguise: we wish to behold him face to face. God gratified even this desire. He had commanded a tabernacle of wood to be made by the hand of man, and that tabernacle he chose for his dwelling-place. But now, when the fulness of time was come, when God had decreed to send his Son into the world that we might be redeemed and adopted as children, then, with his own divine hands, he made a living tabernacle, holy and spotless: the Immaculate Virgin Mary, and in that tabernacle he took up his abode. There he formed for himself a human body and soul: "Thence he came forth and appeared," as St. Augustine says, "to men, to a world in the decline of old age, and in the throes of death, in order that, while every thing about them was rapidly going to decay, he might, by his presence, infuse into all new life and fresh vigor."

In becoming man, God revealed himself most clearly. Men saw God, heard God, even touched God. From that time he has stayed in person with us, and he will stay with us to the end of the world. It is true, Christ ascended into heaven, whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead; yet he found a means to stay with us in the world to the end of time. This means is the institution of the Blessed Sacrament in which he stays day and night upon our altars, to be our victim, the food of our soul, the light of our understanding, the strength of our will, the joy and consolation of our heart. But if, in this august sacrament, the Lord of heaven and earth stays with us to the end of time, it is by means of another sacrament —by that of holy orders. This sacrament, it is true, is received, comparatively, only by few of the faithful; yet it concerns all: for all are to be saved by means of the sacraments, and holy orders give us priests to administer them. Great pains, therefore, should be taken in the explanation of this sublime sacrament. The better the people understand what the priest is, the more they will entreat our Lord always to send them good pastors, who are the greatest blessing that God can bestow upon a congregation; the more they will respect, reverence, and love the priest; the more willing they will be to aid him by temporal means in the promotion of the welfare of religion, and the more young men, also, will be found to serve God in the ecclesiastic state: for our Lord often makes use of a plain, solid explanation of the priesthood to enkindle in young men a strong desire to spend their lives in the service of the Church, and in the salvation of souls.

1. What are holy orders?

Holy orders are the sacrament which bestows upon those who receive it the powers of priesthood, and the grace faithfully to discharge their sacred duties.

The word "order," according to its natural signification, implies a certain arrangement and disposition of superior and inferior things according to their rank and position. Now, as there are different degrees or steps laid down in regular order, by which the sacred powers of the priesthood are gradually communicated to the candidate, therefore all these steps are properly called orders. He must begin with the lowest order, or that of door-keeper, and gradually ascend to the higher orders, or to a more ample share in the sacred powers of the priesthood.

Now, in order to understand well what the sacrament of orders is, it is necessary to remember that it was the will of the heavenly Father that no one should be saved unless through Christ, his well-beloved Son; that is, through faith in his doctrine, through hope in his merits, through charity toward God and all men, through the sacraments and prayer, as means of grace, and through obedience to his orders: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," says Jesus. "No one cometh to the Father but by me." (John xiv, 6.) "In him" (Christ), says St. Paul, "it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of the cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven." (Col. i, 19, 20.) For this purpose, Christ, as man, received from his Father all necessary power and authority: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. xxviii, 18.) Now, the sacred helps which Jesus Christ knew to be necessary for the salvation of souls, were equally required for all mankind to the end of the world. Hence it was necessary either that he himself should stay on earth to the end of time to apply these helps to the souls of men, or that he should appoint others to apply them for him in his name and by his authority. He chose to do the latter. So, from among his disciples, he chose twelve whom he named apostles, and gave them all those sacred powers which he had received from his Father for the salvation of mankind, authorizing them, at the same time, to communicate these powers to others for the salvation of their fellow-men. He instituted the sacrament of holy orders as the means of transmitting these powers:—

1. *Holy orders are a sacrament.* That the sacrament of holy orders is really and truly one of the seven sacraments, is evident from the fact that it has all that is necessary to constitute a sacrament. For, *first*, there is the "outward sign" (or outward part performed by the bishop), namely, *the imposition of hands and prayer*, with the delivery of the instruments of the power which is communicated. The imposition of hands and the prayer which the bishop says, constitute the matter and form in the ordination of priests, and probably nothing further is essential; for the handing to the candidate for priest's orders of a chalice containing wine and water, and a paten with bread, with the words: "Receive

the power to offer sacrifice for the living and dead, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," as well as the last laying-on of the bishop's hands with the accompanying words, are only more explicit expressions of the same act.

No doubt, when our Saviour communicated his powers to his apostles, he conferred them in a visible, sensible manner, expressing, in the words he used, the nature of the particular power given. By so doing, he showed in what manner the apostles and their successors should communicate the same powers to others—that is, in an outward, visible manner, by words and actions, expressing the nature of the power bestowed. That the apostles communicated their powers of the priesthood in a visible manner, that is, by the imposition of hands and prayer, is clear from Holy Scripture. In obedience to the command which they had received from the Holy Ghost, they separated Paul and Barnabas from the body of the faithful, and, after having fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and dedicated them to the work of the ministry. (Acts xiii, 2, 3.) It was in the same manner that St. Paul and Barnabas "ordained priests in every church," according to the testimony of St. Luke. (Acts xiv, 22.) St. Paul recommends Timothy not to lay hands lightly (or hastily) on any man. (Tim. v, 22.) The priest, then, is a man set apart from the rest of the faithful; and the imposition of the hands and the prayer of the apostle or the bishop are essential to his ordination.

Second. There is the "inward grace" (or inward part performed by God), namely, the power of the order received with an indelible character imprinted on the soul; and also actual grace for the due exercise of that order, together with an increase of sanctifying grace. Of this truth St. Paul assures us, in his Epistle to Timothy, in which he says: "Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy (by the prophetic or sacramental words), with the imposition of the hands of the priesthood" (1 Tim. iv, 14); and in his second letter to Timothy, he assures us of the same truth: "I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands." (2 Tim. i, 6.) In his discourse which he addresses to the *priests* of the churches of Asia, assembled at Miletus, he says to them: "Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost has placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God." (Acts xx, 28.)

Thus, bishops, raised by the apostles to the fulness of the priesthood by the imposition of hands, are, according to St. Paul's judgment, charged by the Holy Ghost with the government of the Church.

Third. There is the "institution of Christ." From the declarations of St Paul just cited, it is evident that holy orders are divinely instituted, because God alone can give to the outward sign of the imposition of hands the power of producing grace in the soul. When, therefore, an outward thing is made a certain and efficacious means of grace, it must be in virtue of a divine institution.

Hence we are required to believe, at least in the case of the priesthood, that holy orders are one of the seven sacraments: "If any one shall say that orders, or sacred ordination, are not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord, let him be anathema," says the Council of Trent. (Sess. xxiii, c. 3.)

2. *The sacrament of holy orders bestows upon those who receive it the powers of priesthood.*

A priest, as the word has been understood from the beginning by all people, by Christians, by Jews, nay, even by pagans, is a mysterious, sacred, inviolable being, divine rather than earthly, separated from the rest of mankind by the sublime character of his functions, called from on high, consecrated by a heavenly anointing, offering salutary sacrifices to God for the expiation of sin, and drawing from his character of offering sacrifice a supreme authority over the rest of mankind, whom he teaches and guides in the way of salvation. Such was the priest before the coming of Christ—a mysterious being, related both to heaven and to earth. As such, the priest represented and prefigured Christ, the High, the Chief, Priest, in the most special sense. As he was chosen from among men, he represented and prefigured Christ as man like unto us. As he was obliged to be without blemish, he shadowed forth Jesus Christ as the Lamb without blemish, without spot. As he was the man, the minister, the portion of God, consecrated to God, wholly occupied with the interests of God, he prefigured Jesus Christ as God-man. As he was vested with the functions and powers of the priesthood by a holy anointing, he showed that the Incarnation was, for our Saviour, an anointing altogether divine, celebrated by the prophets, which causes the name of *Christ* to be added to his name Jesus.

As Christ was represented in the priesthood before his coming, so also is he represented in the priesthood after his coming. As the human paternity reminds us of the divine paternity; as the office of a king among men shadows forth the sovereignty of God; as the idea of sacrifice is explained by that of sin and expiation, so does the priesthood of the Catholic Church, in a far more perfect manner, represent Jesus Christ the God-man, as he is known and adored by the whole of Christendom. To understand this more clearly, we must remember that Jesus Christ, our High-Priest, became our Redeemer by sacrificing his life upon the cross. From the fact that he is our Redeemer, he is also our Teacher, our Pastor, our Lawgiver, our supreme Judge and Ruler. Now, he who has been ordained priest has received in his soul, by holy orders, a character which distinguishes him from all other men, and makes him participate in a special manner in the powers of the priesthood of Jesus Christ; that is, in virtue of this character, the priest participates in Christ's power of offering sacrifice, of teaching, of legislating, of judging and ruling. The sacrament of holy orders, then, gives power over Christ's own body, as well as over his mystic body, which is composed of the members of the Church; but in a different manner. The power over Christ's own body, called the power of order, is made over, absolutely and irrevocably, to every priest. The power over Christ's mystic body, called the power of jurisdiction, is given only on condition of due appointment by the Church. As every priest, in virtue of the sacerdotal character, is invested with the power over Christ's own body, and as this character can never be effaced, every priest retains, as long as he lives, the power of offering sacrifice. A priest, therefore, cannot be deprived of the power over Christ's body. Hence, should he become a heretic and say Mass, he would validly consecrate. The same thing can be said of every Catholic bishop. He cannot be deprived of the episcopal character and of the power which is essentially connected with holy orders, for that power is received immediately from God. Should, then, a bishop become a heretic, he still retains his episcopal character, in virtue of which he *validly*, though unlawfully, confers confirmation and holy orders, and offers the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

3. *The sacrament of holy orders gives grace to priests faithfully to discharge their sacred duties.*

It is the duty of the priest to continue Christ's work on earth as teacher, as priest, and as pastor. In order to teach the holy doctrine of Christ with success, like an apostle, it is necessary for him to have the light of grace, which gives him a face-to-face knowledge of the truths to be driven home, a most vivid inward faith in them, pouring itself out in living, breathing words. So that, when explaining the Catholic religion, he thinks only of the truth which he explains, and of Almighty God who first uttered it.

Indeed the triumphs of the Catholic religion, touching, grand, and sublime as they are, are seen only when he who explains it stands before us in the simple majesty of truth, and, overpowered by the weight of his convictions, forgets himself and forgets everything but the truths he has to utter. Then it is that we think, not of him who speaks, or how he speaks, but of what is spoken. One who utters truth in this manner, though unlettered and rude in his speech, will often, by a few simple, earnest words welling from the depths of the soul, thrill and captivate hearts which the most labored rhetoric has left untouched.

"When Almighty God," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "established the heavenly hierarchy, he communicated his light, first, to the angels of the highest order. From these he made it shine upon those of a lower order. But the angels of the highest order shared more abundantly in this divine light than those of the other orders. In like manner, when Almighty God established the ecclesiastical hierarchy on earth, he wished that those who belong to the higher order of the priesthood and are charged by him to instruct the lower order of the laity, should have, not only a more extensive and explicit knowledge of the truths of faith, but also a very lively faith in these truths, in order to be able to teach them in a truly apostolic manner.

Moreover, it is the duty of the priest to continue Christ's work on earth, not only as teacher, but also as priest. Christ, as priest, offered his life on the cross for the salvation of mankind; and his desire was that he himself should be offered, by the apostles and their lawful successors, in the sacrifice of the Mass. To be fitted to take the place of Christ as priest, to represent him in his highest character, in a worthy manner, it is necessary for the priest to be like him in all things,—to be ready, in imitation of his divine Master, to sacrifice, for the sake of his religion, all that is near and dear to him. It is necessary that he should be willing even to lay down his life for the sake of the faith. Finally, the priest, as pastor, is obliged to guide in the way of salvation the souls of those who are confided to his charge. He has to visit and comfort the sick, he has to be a father to the poor and afflicted, a good and kind friend of all—in a word, he has to be a good shepherd.

When reflecting on the duties of a priest, the candidate for the priesthood might say with Jeremias the prophet: "Ah, ah, ah, Lord, I cannot speak:" I have not courage enough for so high an office, for so great a mission. But then it is encouraging for him to know that our dear Lord has instituted the sacrament of holy orders to give him the grace necessary for the due accomplishment of the sacred duties of the priesthood; to give him the spirit of life to animate him; the spirit of grace to sanctify him; the spirit of wisdom to enlighten him; the spirit of love to unite him to Jesus Christ; the spirit of prudence to guide him; the spirit of fortitude to strengthen him; the spirit of piety to comfort and make him fervent; the spirit of peace to calm his passions; the spirit of purity to make him pure; the spirit of liberty to detach him from all earthly things; the spirit of joy to console him; the spirit of humility to inspire him with a mean opinion of himself; the spirit of charity to accompany all his thoughts and actions.

2. What are the powers of priesthood?

1, *To say Mass;* 2, *to forgive sins;* 3, *to preach the word of God, and perform other sacerdotal functions.*

We find, in the thirty-first chapter of Deuteronomy, that, when Moses had written the law of God in a book, he gave this book to the Levites, and commanded them to place it in the tabernacle, beside the ark of the covenant, as a testimony against Israel. On another occasion, when many of the Israelites rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and wished to claim a share in the priestly authority, God ordered twelve rods, each bearing the name of one of the tribes, to be placed in the tabernacle, together with the rod of Aaron. On the next morning, it was found that Aaron's rod alone bloomed, and brought forth fruit. This miraculous rod was the emblem of authority. It was a witness that God had confided the spiritual rule to Aaron and his lawful successors, and to them alone. This rod was also placed in the tabernacle, beside the law of God. On another occasion, God ordered a vessel filled with manna—that miraculous bread from heaven—to be placed beside the law of God and the rod of Aaron.

These three things, the book, the rod, and the manna, signify the three distinct powers which God conferred upon the priests of the Old Law. The book signifies the office of teacher; the rod signifies the office of visible head or ruler; and the manna signifies the grace of God, which was given to the Israelites through the ministry of the priests. The three offices, then, of teacher, of priest, and of ruler, or visible head, existed in the Jewish Church of the Old Law, when our divine Saviour came on earth. Our divine Redeemer confirmed and consecrated these three offices, by uniting them in his own divine person. He was teacher, he was priest, and he was visible head, or king. He was the teacher of nations, the light of the world. He taught all men forever what they must believe, what they must do, and what means they must use to obtain and preserve the grace of God. He was the priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech. He was, as the prophet had foretold and as he himself had declared, the king of an everlasting kingdom. As teacher, he taught us that to know and to do the will of his heavenly Father was the only way to heaven; as priest, he sacrificed his life upon the cross, and thereby obtained for men the graces necessary for salvation; as ruler, or king of an everlasting kingdom, he declared that all men had to believe and to do what he taught them, if they wished to be saved.

Now, Jesus Christ communicated these powers to his apostles, and, through them, to all their lawful successors: the popes, bishops and priests of the Catholic Church.

The power of saying Mass.—In order to give to his priests the power of saying Mass, our Lord Jesus Christ had to die. To redeem the world, it was not necessary that our Lord should die. A single drop of his sacred blood, a single tear, a single prayer of his, would have sufficed; but in order to establish the priesthood, our Lord had to die. He had to leave to the priests of his holy religion a fitting sacrifice; he had to leave them a victim pure, holy, undefiled, worthy of God; and in the entire universe no victim could be found so worthy as himself.

Hence our Lord Jesus Christ instituted, at the last supper, the sacrifice of his sacred body and blood. On the night before his passion, our blessed Redeemer, in presence of his apostles, offered up bread and wine to his heavenly Father; he then, by his almighty power, changed the bread and wine into his sacred body and blood, and offered up his body and blood in sacrifice for our sins: "This," he said, "is my blood, which is shed for the remission of sin."

He then empowered his apostles to offer up this same divine sacrifice. "Do this," he said, or sacrifice this, "in remembrance of me." It was, then, our divine Saviour himself who first offered up the sacrifice of the New Law, —the sacrifice of his body and blood, which we call the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The first Mass, then, that was ever celebrated on earth, was offered up, by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, at the last supper.

Now, all good works together are not of equal value with the sacrifice of the Mass, because they are the works of men; but the holy Mass is the work of God. Martyrdom is nothing in comparison—it is the sacrifice that man makes of his life to God; but the Mass is the sacrifice that God makes of his body and of his blood for man. In this sacrifice there is nothing to be seen but the Infinite. The priest is God—the victim is God. The holy sacrifice of Mass is essentially the very same as the sacrifice of the cross. It differs from the sacrifice of the cross only in appearance. On Mount Calvary, the victim offered to God was the living body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the victim is also the living body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Mount Calvary, the priest that offered the sacrifice was our Lord Jesus Christ himself; and in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the priest that offers sacrifice is also our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Mount Calvary, Jesus Christ was really and visibly present; and on the altar, during holy Mass, Jesus Christ is also *really* present, though invisible.

On the cross, our Saviour died a *painful* and *bloody* death; but in the holy Mass, our Saviour dies only in appearance, or, as it is called, a *mystical* death.

In the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not dead; no, it is the living body, the living, warm heart's-blood; it is the living, rational soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, united to his divinity, that are offered to God in the holy Mass. It is this which gives the holy Mass an infinite value; which makes it the highest worship that can ever be offered to God. In the holy Mass, the Son of God worships his heavenly Father for us; he prays for us; he asks pardon for us; he adores, he gives thanks, for us.

What, then, must be the effects of this august sacrifice? God, appeased by the sacrifice of the Mass, forgives even the most heinous sins, by granting to the sinner the grace of doing penance for them. Without doubt, it is to the efficacy of the Mass that we must attribute the less frequent occurrence, in later times, of those terrible punishments which God formerly inflicted on the wicked. "It is to the Mass," says Timothy of Jerusalem, "that the entire world owes its preservation; without it, the sins of men would have annihilated it long ago." (Orat. de Proph.) Now, the Catholic priest is the only one of God's creatures who can offer to him the holy sacrifice of the Mass. It is by a single Mass that he gives God, for you and for all men, more honor and more thanks than all the angels and saints of heaven. It is by a single Mass that he obtains, for you and for all men, more blessings; that he averts, from you and from all men, more chastisements; that he appeases God more efficaciously, than all the prayers of the angels and saints of heaven can do.

The priest's hands, more sacred than the cherubim that uphold the mercy-seat; more venerable than the sapphire throne on which appeared the ancient of days; more blessed than even the spotless womb of the immaculate Virgin Mary, —his hands touch and handle the Incarnate Word of God. His hands bear that sacred body, before whose dazzling splendor the angels veil their faces in trembling awe. Yes, at the altar I can imagine the blessed spirits in the attitude in which St. John the Evangelist beheld them: "They lay *prostrate* on their faces before the Lamb of God." (Apoc. vii, 11.) But the priest is *standing* at the altar; his is the authority, and his the action. The angels are only witnesses of the holy sacrifice, and God wills that the priest should be its minister. The angels are prostrate before the Lamb of God upon the altar, but the priest is at the table of the divine Lamb; he incorporates himself with him whom the angels hardly dare look upon.

The holy Church, contemplating the unutterable privilege of the blessed Mother of God, cries out in admiration:

"O blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary that bore the Son of the eternal God; and blessed are the breasts that suckled Christ our Lord!" But we can say, with even more justice: "O blessed, thrice blessed, are the hands of the priest into which the eternal Son of God descends every day from heaven; blessed are those hands which bear, which handle, which sacrifice, the ever-blessed Son of God!" The Son of God descended but once into the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary, but he descends every day into the hands of the priest.

Five words uttered by her humility brought the eternal Word into her sacred womb. Five words of the power of the priest bring the same eternal Word upon the altar. If the consent which Mary gave was the conditional cause of the mystery of the incarnation, the action of the priest, speaking in the name and in the all-powerful virtue of Jesus Christ, is the efficient cause of transubstantiation,—the new incarnation, which is but an extension of the first. And what Mary did but once, the priest does every day. While she gave to the Son of God a life of suffering, which ended by the torments of the cross, the priest renders him present, in his hands, in a state immortal and impassible.

The eternal, omnipotent God, in whose presence the pillars of heaven tremble; that God before whom the earth, and all that dwell thereon; before whom the boundless universe, with all its countless suns and planets; before whom all created things, are but as a drop of water, as a grain of sand, as if they were not,—that God of infinite majesty and glory made himself subject to the apostles and their successors in the priesthood, when he said: "Do this for commemoration of me!" The monarchs of the earth have great power: their commands are obeyed, their very name is respected and feared, thousands and thousands of their fellow-men are subject to them; but the priestly power is far greater. Great was the power of Adam when he came forth from the hands of God, in all the majesty of justice and innocence. He was the king of creation, and all the creatures of the earth obeyed him. Great was the power of Moses when, by a single word, he divided the waters of the Red Sea, and led a vast multitude, dry-shod, through the midst of the surging billows. Great was the power of Elias, who caused fire to rain from heaven upon the heads of his enemies. Great was the power of Joshua, who, in the heat of battle, raised his hands to heaven, and commanded the sun: "Move not, O Sun!" he cried, "and thou, Moon, stand still!" And the sun and the moon obeyed his voice. They stood still, in the midst of the heavens, for the space of an entire day. Great, indeed, was the power which God thus gave to man, but the power given by Christ to his priests is infinitely greater. Whenever they say Mass, they hold in their hands, after the words of consecration, Jesus Christ, their Lord and God, to receive him, and to give him to all those who wish to receive him, in holy communion. This power of the priest surpasses even the power of creation. By creation, God produces the substance of bread out of nothing, by his word; but, by the words of the priest in consecration, the substance of bread and wine is changed into the most sacred body and blood of Christ.

O with whom shall I compare the priest? Next to God, his equal cannot be found, even in heaven or on earth. It is in establishing the priesthood that God seems to have exhausted all the treasures of his power and mercy. Indeed, in the light of faith, the man disappears altogether in the priest. Faith beholds in him nothing but Jesus Christ, continuing, in him and through him, the work of redemption for the honor of his Father and the salvation of mankind.

Ah, when we see the priests of the Catholic Church, weak, sinful men as they are, gifted with a power which angels could not, and did not, dare to claim; when we see them possessing power over God himself, possessing power to bear him, to place him, to give him to whom they will,—we cannot help exclaiming, in amazement: "O wondrous miracle! O unheard-of power!" A greater power than this God could not give: it is his own infinite power.

2. *The power of forgiving sins.*

As Jesus Christ cannot wish to enter, by holy communion, into souls as long as they are in mortal sin, the great power of the priests to change bread and wine into Christ's body and blood would be of little avail to the greater part of mankind, had not Christ given them another power, viz.: that of forgiving sins by means of the sacraments, especially by the sacraments of baptism and penance. Therefore, he said to the apostles and the priests: "Go, baptize mankind in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (Matt. xxviii, 19; John xx, 23.) This power is given to priests to free men from their sins, and prepare them for the union with Christ in holy communion. But what does it mean to have the power of forgiving, of destroying, sin? Sin is so great an evil, that, were all the men on earth, were all the saints and angels of heaven, to perform the most rigorous penances; were they to sacrifice everything for the love of God, yet, with all their good works, they would not suffice to blot out a single sin. Nay, even the fierce fires of hell, though burning throughout all eternity, can never destroy a single mortal sin. To have the power of moving mountains is indeed something great; but to have the power of removing sin from the soul is something far greater. To have the power to raise the dead to life is wonderful; but the power to raise the dead soul to life is still more wonderful. To have the power to create new worlds is to partake of God's own omnipotence; but to have the power of forgiving, of destroying, sin, is to hold the very place of God himself—it is to perform one of the greatest works of God's almighty power.

Let us take a man who, of his own free-will, has made himself a slave of sin, a slave of the devil. Who shall free him from this shameful bondage? Shall we call upon the angels and saints of heaven? The saints of heaven are the friends of God, and God honors them by hearing their prayers. They may pray for the sinner, they may obtain for him innumerable graces, but they cannot free him from a single sin.

Shall we call upon his guardian-angel? The guardian-angel may warn the sinner, he may assist him, he may urge him to do penance, but the guardian-angel cannot free him from the chains of sin.

Shall we call upon St. Michael? St. Michael is most powerful; he is the prince of the heavenly hosts; he has conquered Satan and his hellish crew. He can compel the evil spirits to flee away from the sinner, but he cannot free that sinner from a single sin.

Shall we, then, call upon the Blessed Virgin Mary herself? The Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of God; she is the queen of angels and of men; her very name is the terror of hell. She can pray for the sinner, and her prayers are all-powerful with God, but she cannot forgive a single sin; no, not even a single venial sin!

Seek where you will, throughout heaven and earth, and you will find but one created being who can forgive the sinner, who can free him from the chains of sin and hell: and that extraordinary being is the *priest*, the Catholic priest. "Who can forgive sins except God?" was the question which the Pharisees sneeringly asked. "Who can forgive sins?" is the question which the Pharisees of the present day also ask, and I answer: There *is* a man on earth that can forgive sins, and *that* man is the Catholic priest.

Yes, the priest not only declares that the sinner is forgiven, but he *really forgives* him. The priest raises his hand, he pronounces the words of absolution, and in an instant, quick as a flash of light, the chains of hell are burst asunder, and the sinner becomes a child of God. So great is the power of the priest, that the judgments of heaven itself are subject to his decision; the priest absolves on earth, and God absolves in heaven: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." These are the ever-memorable words which Jesus Christ addressed to the apostles and to their successors in the priesthood.

Suppose that our Saviour himself were to come down from heaven, and were to appear here among us; suppose he were to enter one of the confessionals, to hear confessions. Now, let a priest enter another confessional for the same purpose. Suppose that two sinners go to confession, both equally well disposed, equally contrite. Let one of these go to the priest, and the other to our Saviour himself. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ says to the sinner that goes to him, "I absolve thee from thy sins;" and the priest says to the sinner that goes to him, "I absolve thee from thy sins." Now, the absolution of the priest will be just as valid, just as powerful, as the absolution of Jesus Christ himself. The sinner who goes to the priest to confession, will be just as well absolved as the sinner who goes to our blessed Lord himself.

At the end of the world, Jesus Christ shall judge all men himself, "for the Father judges no one, but he has left all judgment to his divine Son;" but as long as this world lasts, Jesus Christ has left all judgment to his priests. He has vested them with his own authority, with his own power: "He that heareth you," he says, "heareth me." He has given them his own divine Spirit: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whosesoever sins you shall retain, they are retained."

The priest is the ambassador, the plenipotentiary, of God. He is the coöperator, the assistant, of God in the work of redemption. This is no exaggeration, it is the inspired language of the apostle: "*Dei adjutores sumus.*" (1 Cor. iii): "We are the coöperators, the assistants, of God." It is to the priest that God speaks, when he says: "Judge between me and my people:" "*Judica inter me et vineam meam.*" (Isa. v.) "This man," says God, speaking to the priest,—"this man is a sinner; he has offended me grievously; I could judge him myself, but I leave this judgment to your decision. I shall forgive him as soon as you grant him forgiveness. He is my enemy, but I shall admit him to my friendship as soon as you declare him worthy. I shall open the gates of heaven to him as soon as you free him from the chains of sin and hell."

This power also surpasses that of any created being, either in heaven or on earth. An earthly judge has great power, yet he can only declare one innocent who has been falsely accused; but the Catholic priests received power to restore to innocence even those who are guilty.

The kings of the earth are powerful, yet their power extends only over a few countries, while the power of the priests extends over the whole earth. Their power reaches to the highest heavens, it penetrates even to the very gates of hell. The treasures of kings are silver and gold—perishable metals; but the treasures of priests are the imperishable merits and graces of our Lord Jesus Christ. Kings have power over the bodies of men only; but the Catholic priests have power over men's souls. Kings have power over their subjects only; but kings and emperors themselves are subject to the priests, because from them they have to expect, not only the light of the true faith, but also the pardon of their sins—the grace of God. Kings have power to open and to close the prison-gates on earth; but the priests have power to open and to close the gates of heaven and of hell. The influence of their power is felt in heaven, in giving to it the elect; it is felt in hell, in snatching from it victims; it is felt in purgatory, in consoling efficaciously its great sufferers.

3. *The power of preaching the word of God, and governing the faithful.*

From the beginning of the world, the depravity of man has shown itself in the constant endeavor to reject the truths of eternal salvation. To this fact we must ascribe the great ignorance and the licentiousness which have at all times afflicted society. Human passion acknowledges no law, and spares neither rights nor conventions. Where it has the power, it exercises it to the advantage of self and to the detriment of social order. To remove the ignorance of the mind and the depravity of the will, it is necessary to impart infallibly to the mind the light of truth, and to lay down authoritatively for the will the unchangeable principles of morality. To accomplish this twofold task, Jesus Christ empowered his apostles, and their lawful successors in the priesthood, to teach his holy doctrine authoritatively to all nations: "Go," said he to them, "and teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii, 19, 20.) He thus empowered them to spread abroad, explain, and preserve his holy doctrines, pure and uncorrupted, and to condemn and reject all false teachings; he empowered them to inveigh against crime, and to encourage virtue; to trace out for every one his individual duties, to monarchs as well as to their subjects, to the learned and to the ignorant, to the rich and to the poor, to the just and to the sinner; he empowered them to offer to all instruction, counsel, and hope; to encourage the good, to exhort the weak, to convert the sinner, to narrate the sweet consolations of the just, and to describe the fearful state of the impenitent sinner; he empowered them to condemn and reject all false principles, impious books and writings of every description, and bad societies; in a word, Christ empowered them to proclaim his doctrine, and apply it everywhere, one and the same; to defend his rights on earth against every enemy; to resist with all their might every passion and tendency of nations, communities or individuals, whenever they abandon the law of God; to make constitutions and decrees conducive to the preservation of faith and morals, and even to prescribe such opinions as approach, more or less closely, open heresy.

There is not a sound maxim, nor a political truth, whose germ is not found in the word of God. Now it is the popes, the bishops and the priests, whom God has appointed to dispense these treasures. Yes, show me, if you can, a single country blessed by faith and civilization, that has not been watered by the tears and by the preaching, by the prayers and by the blood, of those who are styled the light of the world—the priests of the Catholic Church.

All the other gifts of God would avail us nothing without priests. What would be the use of a house full of gold, if there were no one to open the door for you? Now, the priests have the key of all the treasures of heaven; it is they who open the door. They are the stewards of the Lord, the administrators of his goods. Without them, the passion of our Lord would profit us nothing. Look at the poor heathen: of what benefit is our Lord's death to them? Alas! they can have no share in the redemption, so long as they have no priests to apply his blood to their souls.

No one understands this better than the devil and his associates in this world. When they wish to destroy religion, they begin by attacking the priests: for, where there is no priest, there is no sacrifice; and where there is no sacrifice, there is no religion. What should we do in the Church? the people would say; there is no Mass, our Lord is no longer there: we may as well pray at home.

Oh, how sad would be the state of society were the popes, the bishops and priests, to be banished from the earth! The bonds that unite the husband and the wife, the child and the parent, the friend and the friend, would be broken. Peace and justice would flee from the earth. Robbery, murder, hatred, lust, and all the other crimes condemned by the Gospel, would prevail. Faith would no longer elevate the souls of men to heaven. Hope, the sweet consoler of the afflicted, of the widow and the orphan, would flee away, and in her stead would reign black despair, terror, and suicide. Where would we find the sweet virtue of charity, if the popes, the bishops and priests were to disappear forever? Where would we find that charity which consoles the poor and forsaken, which lovingly dries the tears of the widow and the orphan,—that charity which soothes the sick man in his sufferings, and binds up the wounds of the bleeding defender of his country? Where would we find that charity which casts a spark of divine fire into the hearts of so many religious, bidding them abandon home, friends, and everything that is near and dear to them in this world, to go among strangers, among savage tribes, and gain there, in return for their heroism, nothing but outrage, suffering, and death? Where, I ask, would we find this charity, if the popes, the bishops and priests were to disappear forever?

Leave a parish for many years without a priest, and the people thereof will become the blind victims of error, of superstition, and of all kinds of vices. Show me an age, a country, a nation, without priests, and I will show you an age, a country, a nation, without morals, without virtue. Yes, if "religion and science, liberty and justice, principle and right," are not empty sounds—if they have any meaning, they owe their energetic existence in the world to the "salt of the earth"—to the priests of the Catholic Church.

St. Matthew tells us, in his Gospel (vii, 29), that our Saviour taught the people as one having power and authority, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees did. Our dear Lord, who chose the apostles and their successors as the teachers of his religion, wished also that, like him, they should teach with power and authority. He therefore added, to their power of teaching, that of ruling and governing those who believed in him and were baptized. He gave them this power when he said to them: "Amen I say to you: whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. xviii, 18.) In these words Christ gave power to the pastors of his Church to govern the faithful, to regulate the divine service and the manner of administering the sacraments, to govern nations, kings, and peoples, according to his unchangeable doctrine; to make laws for them, and to enforce those laws, by refusing the sacraments to those who transgress them, or by expelling such transgressors from her society, or by imposing upon them such works of penance as were deemed proper for their own spiritual good, and that of others.

4. *Power of performing other sacerdotal functions.*

Our dear Saviour said to his apostles: "To me is given all power in heaven and on earth. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." Now, he who bestows all power excludes none. Christ, therefore, also gave to his apostles and all his priests the power to cast out devils from possessed persons, and to prevent the evil spirits from hurting men in their bodies or property: "And calling together the twelve apostles, he gave them power and authority over all devils." (St. Luke ix, 1.)

Christ also gave to his priests power to bless or consecrate things for the divine service, or for the pious use of the faithful, as altars, chalices, vestments, churches, graveyards, holy-water, oil, bread, wine, palms. By the sin of Adam, the curse of God had come upon all creatures: "Cursed is the earth in thy work," said God to Adam. (Gen.

iii, 17.) But Christ came to take away, not only man's sin, but also the curse which had fallen upon all other creatures of the earth. And as Christ gave power to his priests to drive out sin from the souls of men, by applying to them the merits of his redemption through the sacraments, in like manner he gave them power to free creatures from the curse of sin, by applying to them the blessing of redemption, through prayer, blessing, or consecration, in order to make them work to good to those that love God; for "every creature," says St. Paul, "is sanctified by the word and prayer." (1 Tim. iv, 5.)

Gifted, then, with the powers of Christ, the priests of the Catholic Church are greater than the patriarchs,—greater, more exalted, than the prophets. A widow of Sarepta fed the prophet Elias for some time. In reward for her charity, the prophet obtained for her the miracle that her pot of meal wasted not, and her cruse of oil diminished not, and thus sustained that family in a miraculous manner. The Catholic priests do more: they feed not merely *one* family, but the nations of the world; they give not mere material bread, but the living bread from heaven: the body and blood of Jesus Christ; they strengthen the souls of men with the oil of grace, which they administer to them in the holy sacraments.

Elias raised, moreover, the widow's son to life, but the priests do more: they raise to life the souls of hundreds and thousands. In the sacraments of baptism and penance, they raise to the life of grace the souls of those that are dead in mortal sin. Elias caused fire to rain from heaven upon the heads of the wicked. The priests cause not merely material fire to fall from heaven, they do far more: they cause the fire of divine love to fall upon the cold hearts of sinners, and move them to contrition; they inflame them to a new and perfect life.

Again, the priests of the Catholic Church are greater than the prophets. The prophets beheld the Redeemer only from afar, in the dim future. The Catholic priests behold him present before their eyes. They touch the long-wished-for Redeemer with their hands; they offer him up to the heavenly Father; they carry him through the streets; they even feed on the precious blood of this Holy One; they receive him into their hearts, and unite themselves most intimately with him in holy communion.

The prophets foretold that, when the fulness of time should come, God would write his laws, not on stone, but on men's hearts; he would govern men, not by the law of servile fear, but by the sweet bonds of holy love; that God himself would dwell in them, and direct them by his grace. Now, this fulness of time for which the prophets sighed, came with Jesus Christ. He gave his grace, his own divine life, to man, and he gave it abundantly; and as the ministers of that grace, he chose, not the prophets, not his angels, but the priests of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic priest has the patriarchal dignity of Abraham. Abraham is called the Father of the Faithful. The priests are, in reality, the fathers of the faithful, for they make them the children of God, by preaching the Gospel, and especially by administering to them the holy sacraments. They stand at the helm of the Church—the ark of salvation, like Noah. They are consecrated forever, according to the order of Melchisedech. They are invested with a dignity far higher than that of Aaron. Aaron offered up only the blood of sheep and oxen, while the priests offer up the blood of the Lamb of God, our

Lord Jesus Christ. They have the authority of Moses. Moses led the people of God, through the desert, to the promised land; the priests lead the children of God, through the desert of this life, to the true land of promise,—their home in heaven.

Yes, "I in them" (the apostles and their successors), says Jesus Christ, "and thou, Father, in me. The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them." (John xvii, 22, 23.) Yes, the priests are men, all divine; and the Royal Prophet says of them: "Ye are gods." To forgive sins, to cause the Holy Ghost to dwell in the soul, to change bread and wine into the body and blood of God, are miracles that can, properly speaking, be performed only by God himself. Yet, by the command of God, his priests perform these miracles every day. They may, therefore, truly be said to be gods; for, as St. Gregory Nazianzen says, "to have the power of a priest of Christ is to be a god on earth, with the commission to make gods of his fellow-men." Next to God, the priest is everything. He can be understood only in heaven. If men could understand him upon earth, they would die of love.

What admiration and respect, what love and veneration, would be elicited for him whom the Lord would associate with himself in the government of the universe, ruling with him the course of the stars, the vicissitudes of the seasons, and, if you will, creating with him new worlds. A vocation so marvellous would place this privileged mortal in a rank apart. But the priests are the objects of a distinction far more glorious. They are not called, it is true, to direct the course of the sun, to excite or calm the winds—all that is within the sphere of nature and time. They are called to a higher office: to give to heaven the elect, to snatch victims from hell, to sanctify souls, to coöperate in the redemption of a world, spiritual and indestructible, to fill the greatest of kingdoms with inhabitants, all radiant with glory, divine and everlasting.

Since God, then, has placed the priests of the Catholic Church upon the thrones of his own power and sanctity, since he has given them the titles of "saviors of the world," since he calls them his coöperators in the divine work of redemption, what wonder if he commands all men to hear, to obey, and to honor them, as they are bound to hear, to obey, and to honor God himself! "He that heareth you," says he, "heareth me;" "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." In the priests, therefore, every good Christian sees the ambassadors of the blessed Trinity: "Go," says Christ to them, "go and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In them, then, the Christian beholds the representatives of God the Father, to sustain his cause, to make his name respected, to defend his interests, to promote his glory, to vindicate his honor, to adopt for him children, and to prepare them for his service and his kingdom. The good Christian sees, in the apostles and all their successors, the representatives of the Son of God; because, in his name, and by his authority, they preach his gospel, offer in sacrifice his body and blood, dispense his mysteries and his graces. He sees in them the agents of the Holy Ghost: "It is not you that speak," says Christ, "but the Holy Ghost." (Mark xiii, 11.)

3. Who have the power to confer holy orders or to ordain priests?

The Catholic bishops alone have received this power, by special consecration.

Great, unutterably great, indeed, are the powers of the priests. But these powers were not bestowed upon them for their own private benefit. They received them for the spiritual welfare of the people. And as Christ came to save and sanctify all men, it was his will that his power as teacher, as priest, and as ruler, should continue to the end of time by means of holy orders. But no simple priest can confer the sacrament of holy orders; only the bishops of the Catholic Church can lawfully ordain priests. That to them alone belongs exclusively the administration of this sacrament, is a matter of certainty established by the authority of Scripture, by traditional evidence the most unequivocal, by the unanimous teachings of all the fathers of the Church, by the decrees of councils, and by the practice of the Catholic Church—so much so, that not even the pope can delegate this power to a simple priest; and where attempts were made by those, not bishops, to confer these orders, the outcry against such ordination was loud and general. Some abbots, it is true, were occasionally permitted to confer minor orders. All, however, admit that even this is the proper office of the bishop, for whom, and for whom alone, it is lawful to confer the other orders. Subdeacons, deacons, and priests are ordained by one bishop only. Strictly speaking, one bishop is sufficient to consecrate another bishop; but, according to apostolic tradition,—a tradition which has always been observed in the Church, a bishop-elect is consecrated by three bishops. The Council of Nice desired all the bishops of the province to be present; but commanded the presence of, at least, three, these three having, as regards the consecration, the written consent of all the others.

When a priest is about to be consecrated bishop, the first of the assisting bishops says to the consecrating bishop: "The Church demands that this priest whom I present be ordained or consecrated bishop;" to show that no bishop can be ordained, except when needed, to fill a vacant church. After this, the principal consecrator orders the brief to be read by virtue of which the consecration takes place. This is done, because, according to the present discipline of the Church, bishops cannot be consecrated, unless their election has been confirmed by the pope, and the necessary bulls obtained from him.

Then the bishop-elect makes oath in the hands of the consecrator, in order thereby to declare and insure the communion which, during his whole life, he desires to hold with the Holy See, and the respect and the submission he will ever entertain for the pope and his successors. Afterward the bishop-elect is examined as to faith, morality, and canon-law. This examination takes place, in order that the Church, through the consecrator, may be satisfied that the bishop-elect has all the knowledge necessary for his high office. His duties as bishop are also declared to him, that, impressed with this solemn declaration of them, in the very act of consecration, he may be mindful to fulfil them during his life.

The book of the Gospels is placed on the head and shoulders of the bishop-elect, to signify that he has now to bear the yoke of the Gospel, and that he must carry it with joy during his whole life; that is, that he must be full of the maxims of Jesus Christ, contained in the Gospel, and make them the rule of his life, of his words, of his actions, and of his whole conduct.

Then the bishops consecrating impose their hands on the head of the bishop-elect. This imposition of hands, joined with the prayers accompanying it, is the essential part of the consecration of a bishop, as is evident from Holy Scripture and tradition. (2 Tim. i, 6; St. Aug., lib. v, contra Donat., c. 20.)

Then the head of the bishop-elect is anointed with chrism. The reasons of this anointment appear from the beautiful prayer which follows it. Its object is to beg of God, by this exterior unction, that the interior unction of the Holy Ghost may descend upon and fill the soul of the bishop-elect. His first two fingers and his hands are also anointed with chrism, that the Holy Ghost may make them fruitful and powerful to bless, consecrate, and sanctify all that they touch in the episcopal ministry. Priests in their ordination are anointed with the oil of the catechumens, bishops with chrism: which latter indicates more fully the plenitude of the unction of the Holy Ghost.

The consecrator then delivers to the consecrated bishop the pastoral staff and ring. By the staff he is put in possession of the episcopal authority; and the ring reminds him that he has contracted a species of marriage with the Church. The book of the Gospels is put in his hands, in order to remind him that one of his first and most essential duties is to announce the gospel to those who are committed to his care.

The book of the Gospels is always held open over the shoulders of the new bishop, until the time it is put into his hands. This is to remind him that he ought to be filled himself with the gospel before he preaches it to others; that he must first have learned to bear the yoke of Christ before he can efficaciously teach others to carry it. The new bishop says Mass with the consecrator, to represent the unity of the episcopacy and of the sacrifice.

The mitre given at the end of Mass, being especially the ornament of the bishop, represents, as it were, a helmet given by the Church to her bishops to render them terrible to the enemies of salvation.

The gloves given to the new bishop represent the purity and innocence of Jesus Christ, with which the bishop ought to be clothed, to render agreeable to God, and useful to the people, the sacrifices and prayers which he offers.

The *Te Deum* is chanted in thanksgiving to God for the grace which he has bestowed in giving another bishop to guide his Church.

The enthronization puts the new bishop in possession of his episcopal chair, and the assistant bishops conduct him through the church, that the people may see him and receive his benediction; which benediction, in the presence of his seniors, is ceded by them to him as the first exercise of the jurisdiction he has received.

The words, "*ad multos annos*," which the new bishop addresses thrice to the consecrator, are an expression of his thanks,—a wish that his consecrator may live long for the good of the Church.

Thus every one of our own bishops is the direct descendant of one or other of the apostles. Therefore, every Catholic pastor can, with truth, say to his flock: "I was consecrated bishop by such a Catholic bishop, he himself was consecrated by another such Catholic bishop, and so on, in a direct line, which reaches to the apostles themselves. It is thus through an unbroken line of bishops that I hold from the apostles their own power to preach to you the word of God, to administer to you the sacraments, and to exercise the spiritual government over your souls. With St. Paul, therefore, I can say to you: 'For Christ we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us.' " (2 Cor. v, 20.)

No one, therefore, can ever lawfully and validly exercise the functions of the priesthood, unless he is duly ordained and commissioned by the apostles or their lawful successors; and whoever knows that he is not thus duly ordained and commissioned, and yet presumes to exercise them, commits a grievous sin, and incurs the malediction of God: "Neither doth any man take this honor to himself, but *he* that is called by God, as Aaron was." (Heb. v, 4.) "How shall they preach unless they be sent?" (Rom. x, 15.) Such as are not *ordained* and *sent*, are not true pastors, but hirelings: "They are thieves and robbers that enter not by the door into the sheepfold, but climb up another way." (John x, 1.) They are those false prophets against whom our Lord cautions us, saying: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt. vii, 15); "They are blind and leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit." (Ibid. xv, 14.) St. Peter foretold that there would be such: "There shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition . . . bringing upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Pet. ii, 1.) Almighty God has shown the grievousness of this sacrilegious crime by most terrible judgments. Ozias, King of Juda, presumed to exercise the functions of the priesthood to offer incense; and the High-Priest Azarias "withstood the king and said: It doth not belong to thee, Ozias, to burn incense to the Lord; but to the priests, that is, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated for the ministry." The king persisted. But God instantly struck him with leprosy, "and Ozias was a leper unto the day of his death." (2 Par. xxvi, 16-21.)

But a still more terrible example has been given us, in the persons of Core, Dathan, and Abiron, who, with two hundred and fifty leading men of the synagogue, assumed also the priestly office of offering incense to the Lord. For the earth broke asunder beneath the feet of Core, Dathan, and Abiron ; and opening her mouth, swallowed them down alive into hell; and a fire coming out from the Lord destroyed the two hundred and fifty men that offered the incense ; and when, on account of their death, the people murmured against Moses and Aaron, the Lord destroyed fourteen thousand seven hundred more. (Num. xvi.) Certainly, all this is sufficient to prove that no one has a right to "take this honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was." Therefore, in what a lamentable state, since the Reformation, have England and other Protestant countries been, where each successive *earthly sovereign*, with the government, assumes the functions of Peter, appointing bishops and parsons who, for want of a divine commission, are like so many Cores, leading the people in the way of perdition ! Or rather, the temporal power has assumed the very office of Christ, having established a religion and a priesthood of its own in opposition to *his;* and it even proceeds to such a degree of religious folly, or rather impiety, as to give to any man who applies for it a written *license* to be a preacher of any religion: thus giving an authorization to any one to commit the grievous crime of Core, Dathan, and Abiron, and to expose his hearers, as well as himself, to the like spiritual ruin !

Of all such, it may be literally said: "I did not send them, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied" (Jer. xxiii, 21); "They have not entered by the door into the sheepfold, but they have climbed up another way." (John. x, 1.—"Perry's Instructions.")

To enable us to distinguish the true ministers of God from those of the devil, the true from the false prophets, those who are sent by God from those who are not, Christ instituted the sacrament of holy orders as the means of bestowing the powers of the priesthood, with the grace for the due exercise of the priestly functions. So that only those are sent by God, and "enter by the door," who have received order and mission from the apostles or their lawful successors, the bishops of the Catholic Church.

4. What orders are preparatory to the priesthood?

1, *The four minor orders; 2, the order of subdeacon; 3, the order of deacon.*

Our dear Saviour knew that the number of his followers would greatly increase in the course of time. He knew that a few men were not sufficient to administer the blessings of all the priestly powers to a great number of souls. He also knew that, if a number of pastors were to rule the same people, with equal power and authority, and without any subordination among themselves, such an arrangement would become a source of endless dissensions.

He, therefore, instructed the apostles to communicate to some the fulness of the priestly and pastoral powers, such as they had received from him; and to others, only a part of these powers. The apostles, therefore, as instructed by their divine Master, communicated to some the fulness of their priestly and pastoral powers; and these are the chief pastors of the Church, the successors of the apostles, and are called bishops, appointed by the Holy Ghost to govern the Church. To others they communicated only a portion of their priestly powers, particularly that of changing the bread and wine into the body and blood of

Jesus Christ in offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass; and that of forgiving sins in the sacrament of penance, with all the other sacraments except confirmation and orders: and these are the pastors of the second order, successors of the seventy-two disciples of our Lord, and are properly called priests. This instruction, given by our Lord to his apostles, has always been followed by their successors, the Catholic bishops, and is recorded in the following touching prayer which the bishop solemnly chants when he ordains priests: "It is truly meet, just, right, and salutary, that we should always, and in all places, give thanks to thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God, the Author of honors and the Distributor of all dignities, through whom all things progress; through whom everything is strengthened, the increase of the rational nature being ever enlarged and improved in order, fitness, and proportion. *Hence, there is an advance, also, in the grades of the priesthood, and in the offices of the Levites, that are instituted by mystic sacraments; so that, when thou hadst appointed the chief priests for ruling thy people, thou didst choose men of inferior order and secondary dignity to be associated with them, and to aid them in their works. So, in the desert, thou didst spread the spirit of Moses by the minds of seventy wise and prudent men; and using them as his coadjutors among the people, he easily governed innumerable multitudes. So also thou didst transfuse the superabundance of their father's fulness into Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron, that the ministry of the priests might be sufficient for the salutary sacrifices and more frequent sacraments. By this provident care, O Lord! thou didst add teachers of the faith as companions to the apostles of thy Son, by whose means they filled the whole world with preachings of secondary authority. Wherefore* *we beseech thee, O Lord! grant those helps to our weakness also, who need them the more in proportion to our greater frailty. Bestow, we beseech thee, O Almighty Father! on these thy servants the dignity of the priesthood; renew in their hearts the spirit of holiness; that, at thy hands, O God! they may receive and hold the office of second dignity*, and, by the example of their conversation, may gently correct the morals of others. Let them be provident coöperators with our order. Let the model of all justice shine forth in them, that, when they shall give a good account of the stewardship committed to them, they may obtain the rewards of everlasting blessedness: through the same Jesus Christ, thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen."

The apostles soon felt the need of another ministry, inferior to that of priests. The following account of it is found in the Acts of the Apostles (vi, 1):—Complaints were made by the faithful about the division of the food at the feasts of charity, which at that time followed the distribution of the Eucharist. Thereupon the apostles called the faithful together, and said to them: "It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business: and they chose Stephen . . . Philip . . . etc. These they set before the apostles, and they, praying, imposed hands upon them." St. Luke relates how these deacons discharged their ministry: Philip baptized, Stephen preached the gospel, performed miracles, etc. (Acts viii and vi.) St. Polycarp and St. Ignatius, the disciples of the apostles, call the deacons ministers of Jesus Christ and of his Church. (St. Polycarp, Ep. ad Philip., c. v; St. Ignat., Ep. ad Tral., c. ii, et ad Magnes., c. vi.) Pope St. Clement, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, says that, in instituting the diaconate, the apostles fulfilled the Scriptures. St. Ignatius wrote to the faithful at Smyrna (c. viii): "Follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ does his Father; and the priests as the apostles, and reverence the deacons as the command of God." The reason, then, why deacons were appointed was, that they should help the priest and relieve his burden in the external management of the Church, especially in the distribution of alms. In the absence of the bishop and priest, the deacon may be delegated to expound the gospel to the people; not, however, from an elevated place—to make it understood that this is not his proper office. The deacon's principal office at present is to assist the priest during solemn High Mass. He pours wine into the chalice, offers it with the priest, chants the Gospel, and dismisses the people at the end of the divine service. When it was the discipline of the Church to administer holy communion in both kinds, the deacon used to distribute the chalice; he used also to carry the Blessed Sacrament to the sick.

The same necessity which had occasioned the institution of deacons, gave rise to the institution of subdeacons and the four minor or lesser orders. "The ministry of so exalted a priesthood," says the Council of Trent, "is something divine. In order to surround it with greater dignity and veneration, it was meet that, in the admirable economy of the Church, there should be several distinct orders of ministers, destined by their office to serve the priesthood, and so disposed that, beginning with the clerical tonsure, they should gradually ascend through the lesser to the greater orders." Their number, according to the uniform and universal doctrine of the Catholic Church, is seven, namely: Porter, Reader, Exorcist, Acolyte, Subdeacon, Deacon and Priest. The episcopacy is included in the order of the priesthood, as being its plenitude. This number of ministers was principally instituted for the solemn celebration of Mass, and for the consecration and administration of the Holy Eucharist. Some of these orders are greater and are called "holy," whilst others are lesser and are called "minor orders." The greater or holy orders are subdeaconship, deaconship, and priesthood. These are called greater or holy orders, because a person who has received them is entirely dedicated to the service of God and of his Church, and can never again return to the world. The lesser or minor orders are porter, reader, exorcist, and acolyte. They are called lesser or minor orders, because those who have received them remain still free to leave the service of the Church and return to the world.

Several documents of the third century show that all the orders now recognized existed, at that period, in the Latin Church. (Euseb. Hist. Eccl., lib. vi, c. 43.) According to the statement of Anastasius Bibliothecarius, Pope Cajus ordered, in 283, that "no one should be made bishop who had not previously been porter, reader, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, and priest." (*De Vitis Rom. Pontiff.*)

The office of the subdeacon, as the name shows, is to serve the deacon at the altar. It is his business to prepare the linen, the vessels, the bread and wine, necessary for the sacrifice. He delivers the chalice and paten to the deacon, hands him the cruet filled with wine, and pours the water into the chalice, while the priest blesses it. He chants the Epistle, ministers water to the bishop when he washes his hands during the Mass, and assists as a witness to the sacred mysteries.

The acolyte accompanies and serves the deacon and subdeacon. He hands to the latter the cruets filled with wine and water; carries and attends to the lights used during the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

The exorcist receives power to drive out evil spirits from those who are possessed.

The reader's office is to read portions of the Old and of the New Testament during certain services of the Church.

The porter has to keep the keys and guard the door of the Church, and exclude unworthy persons from entering. His duties correspond to those of a sacristan.

As a preparation for orders, there is a ceremony called the tonsure, in which the hair is cut off from the top of the head in the form of a crown, in honor of the crown of thorns which our Saviour wore, and to denote the royal dignity of the clerical state. Persons who have been tonsured are thenceforth called clerics, because they have chosen the Lord for their lot ("*cleros*") and inheritance.

Such are the different kinds of ministers of the Church. We must not, however, suppose that, because there are different kinds of orders, there are more sacraments of orders. Different ordinations are but distinct modes of applying one and the same sacrament, to bestow different kinds and degrees of the same grace—that is, power over Christ's body, natural and mystical. There seems no ground for extending the sacrament below the diaconate to the other orders, which are purely of ecclesiastical origin. The conferring of the orders is called ordination.

In bishops, as has been already remarked, resides the plenitude of the priesthood. They possess, by divine right, a superiority over the simple priests in authority and jurisdiction, as well as in order. They have always been considered as the proper successors of the apostles, as the real heads of the priests and of the faithful. When Arius, in the fourth century, denied this preëminence, the whole Church at once rejected him as a heretic, as is attested by St. Epiphanius and St. Augustine. They alleged against him both the Holy Scriptures, which show us that the apostles were superior to the disciples; and the unanimous opinion of the fathers, who see in the bishops the successors of the apostles, in the priests the successors of the disciples. To remove the least doubt about the preëminence of bishops over priests, the Council of Trent has declared it an article of faith. Superior to all these, is the Sovereign Pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, whom our Lord constituted the rock and the infallible teacher of his Church, and to whom he gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven. He therefore has, by divine right, a superiority or *primacy*, not only of honor and dignity, but also of authority and jurisdiction, over all the other bishops. To him it pertains to provide the churches with pastors, to determine the impediments which make marriage null and void and to dispense with them, to convoke a general council, to confirm its decrees, to resolve the doubts raised by them, to create cardinals, to appoint bishops, to watch over the reform of studies, to correct abuses, to decide the most grave causes in which bishops are concerned. He can reserve to himself the absolving from certain grave crimes, and absolve those who have possessed themselves of ecclesiastical property. Without his judgment, nothing of importance can be established in the Church.

Christ willed, indeed, that there should be bishops to assist the pope in the government of the Church. Hence St. Paul says: "The Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God." The episcopacy, therefore, is *of divine right*, as much as the Papacy is. But as Christ knew that the arbitrary use of the priestly and pastoral powers would lead to many excesses, he wisely placed the exercise of those powers under the supreme jurisdiction of the head of his Church.

Hence the choice of a bishop has to be made, or at least to be confirmed, by the pope; from him each bishop holds his jurisdiction over the territory assigned to him by the pope. Episcopal jurisdiction has been instituted by Christ in such a manner, that each bishop receives his jurisdiction from the pope, who makes the bishops sharers in the power of the keys which Christ gave to Peter alone, and, in his person, to his successors: "The Lord," says Tertullian, "has given the keys to St. Peter, and, through him, to the Church." St. Gregory of Nyssa says the same, in other words: "Through Peter, Christ has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the bishops." As Peter and his successors alone have received the keys of the kingdom of God, they alone can communicate the use of them to the rest of the pastors. From Peter and his successors the bishops hold the jurisdiction which they exercise in their diocese; it is by him that they hold, in their dioceses, the place of Christ, as priests, as pontiffs, as doctors, as legislators, as judges, as heads and pastors of the faithful under their jurisdiction, and are, as St. Paul says, ambassadors for Jesus Christ, God's coadjutors, who exhort the faithful by their mouth: for all this is what constitutes jurisdiction. This doctrine has been solemnly declared by Pius IX, in his encyclical letter of November

9th, 1846, addressed to the archbishops and bishops of the Catholic Church: "Come with an open heart," he says, "and with full confidence, to the see of the blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, the centre of Catholic unity, and the summit of the episcopacy, *whence the episcopacy itself derives its origin and its authority*."

Episcopal consecration, however, is not necessary for the exercise of episcopal jurisdiction; all that is necessary is, that the election of a bishop should be confirmed by the pope. This confirmation of the pope gives to the bishop-elect canonical institution, and confers on him jurisdiction over all the faithful of the territory which has been assigned to him. This jurisdiction, received from the pope, may also be taken away by the pope. All bishops are on an equality as to their episcopal character, but the jurisdiction of some—of patriarchs, metropolitans, and archbishops—is more extended than that of others. This privilege of greater power is conferred by the pope only, as he may think fit to grant, to this or that bishop, a greater or less share of the supreme authority which he holds over all the churches.

In the early ages of the Church, the title *patriarch* (sovereign father, chief father) was given to the titular bishops of the sees of the most important cities, such as Alexandria, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Antioch. The Patriarch of Rome has always been considered the universal patriarch. The bishops presiding over the capital cities of the empire were called *metropolitans*, but, in later times, archbishops, that is, chief bishops. The patriarchal churches were established by the Holy See, wherein the power rests of extending or limiting the jurisdiction of any bishop; for, "everything," says St. Leo, "which Christ has given to the other bishops, has been given through St. Peter."

Besides the pope and the bishops, there are other legitimate pastors, called parish priests, who are subject to their respective bishops; for, as the bishop possesses the plenitude of the priesthood, he enjoys by *divine right*, that is, by Christ's institution, a superiority, not only of precedence and of honor, but even of authority, over all his priests, who, without his good will and pleasure, can do nothing in regard to ecclesiastical matters. He is the pastor of his whole diocese. He can, therefore, give to this or that priest a jurisdiction more or less extended. For good reasons he can also restrict the jurisdiction which he has given, and even withdraw it altogether.

In the early ages of Christianity, there was but one church in each city or town, in which the faithful assembled under the presidency of the bishop. But when, in the course of time, the number of Christians had considerably increased, and bishops were unable to attend to the spiritual wants of their flock, dioceses were divided into parishes; that is, a union of many families, who assemble in a particular church, called parochial church, to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and the other duties of religion. Each parochial church is attended by a priest called the parish priest, whose duty it is to instruct the people in the way of salvation, and administer to them the sacraments of baptism, holy eucharist, penance, matrimony, and extreme unction. From a custom long established, the parish priest can dispense his parishioners in matters of fasting and abstinence, and in the observation of Sundays and holy-days. Parish priests are often assisted in their labor by other priests, called curates or assistants. Every parish, then, has three immediate pastors: the pope, the bishop, and the parish priest.

All the principal churches in the world profess their union with the Church of Rome. She is the mistress of all others: "To be united with the See of Rome," says St. Cyprian, "is to be united with the Catholic Church: for the Church of Rome is the principal Church; the bishop of Rome, the chief bishop; the episcopal throne of this Church is the throne of Peter, the source and centre of ecclesiastical unity; and therefore all bishops of the world must, either directly or indirectly, be in communication with Rome, in order that, by thus communicating with her, the union of all may be preserved."

From what has been said of the powers of the pope, of the bishops and of priests, it is evident that, if the Church is the spouse of Christ, the popes, bishops, and priests are her guardians. If the Church is an army, ranged in battle, the popes, the bishops, and priests are her generals. If the Church is a vessel, navigating through the storms of persecutions, the popes, bishops, and priests are her pilots. If the Church is the mystic body of Christ, and if the faithful are its members, the popes, the bishops, and the priests are the principal members of this body. By their eyes, Jesus Christ watches over his flock; by their feet, he carries to every nation the gospel of peace; by their hearts, he diffuses everywhere the life of that divine charity without which all is dead. If the Church is the people of acquisition, bought at a great price, the popes, the bishops, and priests are the leaders, the teachers, the princes, of that chosen generation. If the Church is that sacred edifice, built up by the divine wisdom itself for the children of God, the popes, the bishops, and priests are the administrators of this palace; they are the columns of the Church upon which the whole world rests. God the Father has created the world without the popes, the bishops, and priests, but it is only through them that he saves it. God the Son redeemed the world without the popes, the bishops, and priests, but it is only by them that he applies his blood to the souls of men, and secures the fruits of his copious redemption. And you can hardly name a single blessing of the Holy Ghost, without beholding by the side of that blessing the priest as the instrument through which that divine Spirit communicates his blessing. Yes; if St. Bernard is right in saying that all comes to us through Mary, we are also right in saying that all comes to the people through the popes, the bishops, and priests—all happiness, all graces, all heavenly gifts.

5. Who only should receive holy orders?

He only who is called by God to become a priest.

To receive the sacrament of holy orders validly, the person to be ordained must be a man; for only a man can represent Christ, and only a man can mediate between God and man. "A man," says the apostle, "is the glory of God, but a woman is the glory of the man." (1 Cor. xi, 7.) He must have been baptized and must intend to be ordained.

But, to receive the sacrament worthily, he must be in the state of grace, and he must especially have a vocation or call from God to the priesthood. For, "no man," says St. Paul, "taketh the honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was." (Heb. v, 4.) He who intrudes himself into the sanctuary without being called by God, is but a thief and a robber, says the Council of Trent. For having touched holy things without divine mission, Core was swallowed up alive by the earth, Saul was rejected from being king, Jeroboam's hand withered, Ozias was covered with leprosy, Oza was struck dead. The service of the ancient temple was committed to the Levites exclusively. Throughout, then, the priesthood is placed above the gifts of nature, the pretensions of ambition, the prerogatives of temporal power. Melchisedech, the priest of the Most High, appeared in the world, without parentage, without genealogy, his origin and his end alike unknown. This vocation from on high must precede sacerdotal ordination, if grace is to accompany the rite. Now, it is but too true that not all those who study for the priesthood are called to this sublime office. Alas! there are but too many who study from low and worldly motives, and seek in the ecclesiastical state nothing but temporal advantages. To this kind of students I have but a few words to say:—

My dear young friends, I conjure you, by the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, consider well that, in order to save your souls, you must embrace that state of life to which God has called you; for, in that state alone, you occupy the place for which God has destined you from all eternity, and in that state he will give you all the graces necessary to fulfil all your duties. If you live out of the state to which you are called, it will be very difficult, nay, almost impossible, for you to work out your salvation. This is true of every one who lives in a state of life to which God has not called him; but it is especially true of all those who have chosen the ecclesiastical state, without being called thereto by God. This is evident; for, in the first place, it is grievous presumption in any one to dare enter into the Holy of holies without having a truly divine vocation. Moreover, every one who enters this holy state without being called, will be deprived of the proper means and graces to comply with the duties of this holy state; and even though he should be able to comply with these duties, yet, having strayed away from the right road, he will find every other very steep and difficult, and he will be like a dislocated member, which may still perform some services, but not without great difficulty.

Any one who receives holy orders without having the signs of a true vocation from God, becomes guilty of mortal sin. This is the teaching of St. Alphonsus and of many other learned theologians, especially of St. Augustine, who says, when speaking of the punishment of Core, Dathan, and Abiron, who wished to exercise the functions of High Priest without being called thereto: "They were condemned, in order that every one might be deterred from taking upon himself the office of high-priest without being called thereto by God. This terrible fate will befall all those deacons, priests, and bishops, who enter or intrude themselves into the ecclesiastical state from merely worldly motives, and without being called thereto by God." (Serm. 98.) St. Ephrem considers as reprobates all those who dare to become priests without a divine vocation. "I am astounded," says he, "at the madness of those who are so presumptuous as to perform the functions of the priesthood without having grace for it from Jesus Christ. Unhappy wretches! they do not consider that, by doing so, they are preparing for themselves everlasting torments." (De Sacerdot.) I would therefore earnestly urge those young men who are studying for the priesthood, without having evidently a vocation to it, to give up, as soon as possible, the idea of embracing the ecclesiastical state.

6. Who may believe himself called by God to the priesthood?

He whose desire to become a priest is great and disinterested, and whose talents, mind, and virtue, qualify him for that holy state.

When a king levies soldiers to make war, he must have weapons wherewith to arm them. It would be utterly foolish to send them to fight without arms. It would be simply to sacrifice his men to no purpose, and to invite defeat. Surely God acts with, at least, equal wisdom: "He does not call," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "without giving, at the same time, to those whom he calls, all that is necessary to accomplish the end for which he calls." (Serm. i, de St. Joseph.)

If God, then, calls a young man to the ecclesiastical state, he gives him the physical, intellectual, and moral qualities necessary for that state of life; that is, he not only gives him the inclination, but he also endows him with the ability, for the performance of the duties of the priesthood.

With regard to *ability*, the physical constitution of the young student should be such as to aid rather than prevent the development of his intellectual and moral qualities; and it should be sufficiently strong to endure the hardships of the life of a priest. The mind of the student should be strong, to be able to apply to study and spiritual exercises without danger of being deranged. Weak minds are apt to be deranged by close mental application.

With regard to the intellectual faculties, the student need not have talents so brilliant and extraordinary as to make him a great mind; but he should have a sound practical judgment, that is, he should have good common-sense:

"*Moins d'esprit, plus de jugement,*" as the French say. Neither great talents for certain branches of science, nor piety, nor the spirit of devotion, can make up for a deficiency in judgment or common-sense. Students of average talents, yet gifted with a sound practical judgment, are generally best suited for the priesthood, because they are humble and docile. Men of superior talents, but not possessing at the same time an unusual disposition for advancing in virtue, are seldom good for the sanctuary; for no solid virtue can take root in self-conceited and self-willed souls. However, I do not wish to say that they should not be admitted; but I do say that great caution should be used in admitting them, for, in time, and by the grace of God, they may greatly change. And such a change will undoubtedly come to pass, if they are faithful in using those means which are given them for their cure.

As to the moral qualities of the student, they should be such as to suit the sacerdotal life. Hence, he should not be of a quarrelsome and melancholy, but rather of a cheerful, happy, gay, affable, and sociable disposition.

From what has been said, it is easy to understand why the Church looks upon certain bodily and mental defects as irregularities which disqualify for the reception of holy orders, and for the exercise of those orders when they have already been received. The Church, therefore, does not admit to holy orders those whose bodily defects make it impossible for them to exercise ecclesiastical functions, or to exercise them with decent propriety: for example, the loss of the thumb or of the left eye, or a body so disfigured as to excite the horror, or contempt, or pity of the people. If these defects arise after ordination, the priest can exercise those functions for which his defect does not disqualify him. Thus, a priest who has lost his hand cannot say Mass, but he may preach and hear confessions. A priest who has become deaf cannot hear confessions, but he may say Mass. Nor does the Church admit to holy orders, lunatics, idiots, possessed, epileptical persons, and those who are grossly ignorant. If a man has been once afflicted in any of these ways, he cannot be ordained without a dispensation; and if, after ordination, he is so afflicted, he cannot exercise the functions of his order until after a year's probation, that the bishop may be satisfied he has been perfectly cured.

Irregular are also those who are not born in lawful wedlock; those who are not of the prescribed canonical age to receive orders; and if such do receive orders without a lawful dispensation, they remain perpetually irregular. Newly-converted persons are in the same predicament, because they are regarded as infants in the spiritual life, and may be lost through pride, if they see themselves so quickly raised unto spiritual fathers and masters. (1 Tim. iii, 6.)

Irregular are also those who are slaves, as long as they are in that state; also those who are burdened with debts, until those debts or obligations are cancelled or discharged, and the person perfectly free. This irregularity is founded in the desire of the Church that her pastors should not be entangled in any secular affairs after their ordination. (2 Tim. ii, 4.)

Irregular, again, are those who are not baptized; those who are married; those who exercise professions which contribute to the effusion of blood, the mutilation or death of any one. Hence, soldiers who have been in battle, judges who have condemned men to death, and surgeons, are irregular.

Those, also, are irregular, who have been subjected to public penance, or who, by their scandals and notorious excesses, have lost their reputation, or become infamous.

Crimes, such as homicide, illicit mutilation, heresy (that is, the exterior or public profession of any error condemned by the Church, such as Calvinism); infamy (such as the profession of usury, comedy, tragedy, for public amusement and the like); the uncanonical reception or exercise of holy orders, the reception of baptism twice, and the violation of censures already incurred, render one irregular. However, it must be remarked that baptism removes all those irregularities which arise from crime. A religious profession removes irregularities arising from want of honest birth. The pope can dispense with the greater part of irregularities, and the bishop can dispense with those arising from hidden crime, which have not been carried to the public court, except in the case of voluntary homicide.

There are many young men whose physical, intellectual, and moral qualities would be sufficiently good for the priesthood; yet, for all that, they are not called to that sublime state, unless they experience at the same time an *inclination* for the sacerdotal life. By inclination is meant a firm and constant will to serve God in this state of life and procure the salvation of souls. In many, the will is so inflamed with love of the priesthood, that they overcome every obstacle thrown in their way to prevent them from becoming priests. Their vocation is evident, and may be called extraordinary.

In others, and, perhaps, in the greater part of those who are called to the priesthood, this love or inclination for this holy state is not so sensibly strong; but their understanding is so much enlightened by the grace of God, that they discover the inestimable treasures of the priesthood, the great glory of God, the immense good of souls, and the unspeakable happiness in heaven, are to be gained by the exercise of the priestly functions. As this kind of inclination is grounded in the light of reason and faith, it is less subject to error, and is more likely to last, than the other, which is founded only in a fervent motion of the will.

Now, in the opinion of those who are experienced in this matter, *the firm and constant will of a young man to serve God in the manner and in the place where he feels himself called, is the best mark of a divine vocation.* But observe, that, if we say *a firm and constant will* of serving God, we do not say that a young man should, from the beginning, perform all that is required by his vocation, and that he should be perfect at once, and never feel tempted, unsettled, and unshaken in his undertaking, that he should never experience any doubts as to his vocation to the priesthood, or should not waver, at times, in a kind of irresolution about his vocation; for this may happen from the weakness and repugnance of nature, and the temptations of the devil. Oh no! that is not what we wish to say; for every one is more or less subject to passions, changes, and vicissitudes; and a person will love one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow. It is not, then, by these different natural feelings that we ought to judge of the *firmness and constancy of the will;* but we should consider rather whether, amid this variety of feelings, the will remains firm and unshaken, so as not to give up the good which it has embraced. So that we do not need a *sensible* constancy as a mark of a good vocation; but a constancy which is in the *superior part of the soul*, and which is *effective.*

Therefore, in order to know whether you are called to the priesthood, it is not necessary for you to wait until God speaks to you about it in a sensible manner; nor is it necessary that an angel from heaven should come to make God's will known to you; nor is it necessary to have your vocation examined by ten or twelve divines to ascertain whether the inspiration is good or bad, whether or not you ought to follow it. But you ought to correspond to it well, and cultivate the first impulse of grace, and then you should not feel distressed if coldness and repugnance arise about your vocation: for, if you always strive to keep your will very firm in the determination of seeking the good shown to you in the light of reason and grace, God will not fail to make all turn out well to his glory.

Young men with these dispositions may feel sure of their divine vocation to the priesthood. To them may be applied the words of the Gospel: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." (John xv, 16.) But in order to become a good, efficient priest, it is not enough to have a divine vocation to the priesthood. Those who are called must also faithfully correspond to their calling by preparing themselves diligently for the worthy reception of holy orders. Consider, then, well, my dear young friends, the high dignity to which you are called. The priesthood is the highest dignity on earth. Innocent III says, "that the priest is placed between God and man; that he is less than God, but more than man." This dignity supposes, besides the divine vocation, positive holinesss of life; that is to say, whosoever intends to embrace the ecclesiastical state must not only be free from mortal sin, but he must also be enriched with every virtue. The Church, during eleven centuries, excluded from this holy state every one who had committed even one mortal sin after baptism; and if any one, after having received holy orders, fell into a mortal sin, he was deposed forever from his sacred office, for the simple reason that he who is not holy should not touch what is holy.

This severe discipline of the Church, it is true, has been greatly mitigated; but it has always been required that he who had in his past life become guilty of grievous sins, and desired to receive holy orders, should first lead a pure life for some time previous to his ordination. It would certainly be a mortal sin to receive any of the holy orders, while still addicted to a sinful habit. "If I consider your vocation," says St. Bernard, "I am seized with horror, especially if I see that no true penance has preceded your ordination."

Indeed Jesus Christ does not wish to intrust so complete a power over his own virginal body and over his mystic body, the faithful, except to those who, by his grace, have gained power over their own bodies. Can he, who is unfaithful in that which is less, be faithful in that which is greater? And should not he who would bring into subjection the passions of others, in the first place, be master of his own: "If, then, you have not been faithful in the unjust mammon, who will trust you with that which is the true?" (Luke xvi, 11.) He, therefore, who is called to the priesthood, must make his body a victim of continence, modesty, and other virtues.

Many of the saints would never consent to receive holy orders. St. Francis of Assisium once beheld, in a vision, a crystal vase filled with most limpid water. God revealed to him that the soul of a priest must be as pure as this crystal vase. This vision made such a deep impression upon him, that he could never afterward be prevailed upon to accept the dignity of the priesthood.

The Abbot Theodore had received the order of deacon. One day he beheld a fiery column, and heard, at the same time, a voice, saying: "If thy heart be as fiery as this column, thou mayest exercise the functions of thy sacred order." He could never afterward consent to exercise these sacred functions. Every one, even the most perverse, feels naturally that the candidate for the priesthood should be holy: the least fault in him is considered unpardonable.

"I have appointed you," says our Lord Jesus Christ, "that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." (John xv, 16.) Now, a student will not bring forth this fruit, that is to say, holiness of life, unless he seriously endeavors, in the course of his studies, to sanctify himself. Let him not imagine that sanctity will be infused into his soul by the sacrament of holy orders; let him rest assured that, if he is not a virtuous student, he will never be a virtuous priest. A light-minded student will be a light-minded priest; a proud, immortified, and sensual student will make a proud, immortified, and sensual priest.

It is true, you must study to acquire the necessary science, without which you would be unfit for the sacred ministry. But, my dear young friends, it is not learning, but purity of life, that will qualify you for the priesthood. A certain author says, "that those who know that their hearts are enslaved by sinful habits, and still dare to receive holy orders, should rather be led to a place of execution than to the Church of God." It is not enough for the candidate for the priesthood to be free from sin; he must, moreover, have led a pious life, and have acquired a certain facility in the practice of virtue. Should a candidate for any of the holy orders be addicted to some sinful habit at the time of his ordination, he is, according to the opinion of theologians, unworthy to receive even the sacrament of penance, even though he should otherwise be properly disposed. For, in order to receive the sacrament of penance worthily at such a time, he must also be properly disposed to receive that of holy orders. A confessor, who knowingly and wilfully would absolve such a candidate, would thereby become guilty of mortal sin; and should he give him a good testimonial, so that the young candidate would, on that account, be promoted to holy orders, such a confessor would become answerable for all the sins committed by this unworthy priest during the whole course of his ministry.

Whoever, then, wishes to receive holy orders worthily, must necessarily lead a virtuous life. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, a priest must be possessed of greater interior holiness than even a religious, on account of the holy and sublime functions of the sacred ministry, and especially, because he has to offer up so often the most august sacrifice of the Mass.

I do not fear so much that students will fail to acquire sufficient knowledge, but I fear very much that they will not acquire sufficient holiness of life before receiving holy orders. I have always observed that the greater number of ecclesiastical students make great effort to acquire sufficient knowledge; but few, indeed, are those who earnestly strive to lead a holy life. The natural ambition to appear learned before others, and the thought that they will have to preach one day in presence of heretics and unbelievers, induce them to make every exertion to learn how to refute every error, and to defend the truths of our holy religion. They apply themselves so seriously to their studies, that their mind is altogether taken up with them. This is especially the case when they consider the actual state of society, and the infidel and immoral principles that prevail everywhere. It is, indeed, only too true that we live in a most anti-Christian age; principles are disregarded, and iniquity is held in veneration; we see nothing but confusion in religion, in government, in the family circle. Sects spring up and swarm like locusts, destroying not only revealed religion, but rejecting even the law of nature. Fraud, theft, and robbery, are practised almost as a common trade. The press justifies rebellion, secret societies, and plots for the overthrow of established governments. The civil law, by granting divorce, has broken the family tie. Children are allowed to grow up in ignorance of true religious principles; their fathers being without religion, or given up to the most detestable vices, or their mothers destitute of virtue, and infected in the highest degree with the spirit of vanity, the natural consequence is, that these children are regardless of their parents. The number of apostates is on the increase, at least in the younger generation; immoral and infidel tracts circulate freely; daily journals, weekly magazines, the great organs of public opinion, become more unchristian every day; so much so, that no one who has at heart the morality of his fellow-men, especially of youth, can, with propriety, recommend them for perusal: and yet how eagerly are they sought for and devoured by every class of men!

Such diseases of the human mind and heart, the student will think, require a remedy. To counteract and head them, he will think, will require great learning and experience, and that, consequently, a thorough and earnest study of philosophy and theology will be absolutely necessary. But here lies the stumbling-block for the greater number of students: they endeavor rather to cultivate the mind than the heart; they are more desirous to fill their memory with the principles of philosophy and other profane sciences, than with the principles of Jesus Christ and his saints; they care more to know their lessons well than to make a good meditation; they take more pains to appear well prepared before their professors and schoolmates than before Jesus Christ in holy communion; they make greater efforts to compose a good discourse than to make a good examination of conscience; they make greater efforts to acquire a reputation for learning than they do to acquire the virtues of humility and sincere charity. They are more pleased with the praises of the world than with the good pleasure of Jesus Christ. Clearness in reasoning, and ability in delivering a learned discourse, is, in their opinion, of more importance than the spirit of meekness, condescension, and submission, in all their words and actions. They take more pleasure in reading profane, frivolous books, than such as nourish piety and inspire love for solitude and prayer. In a word, they make greater efforts to acquire the wisdom of the world than that of Jesus Christ and his saints. Thus, study, instead of uniting them more closely with God, only separates them farther from him.

I do not, by any means, wish to blame students for applying themselves to study. What I blame in them is the manner in which they apply themselves.

Learning can do much good, it is true; but, however much it may accomplish, experience teaches us, in the present as in the past, that moral evils never yield to any other force than the grace of God. A learned man may enlighten the minds of his fellow-men, and expel their darkness and errors; but, unless the grace of God touch their hearts, they will not embrace the truth. "It is neither philosophy," wrote St. Vincent de Paul to one of his priests, "nor theology, nor eloquence alone, that moves the soul." This truth was felt most keenly by St. Bernard whilst at Paris, 1123. He had scarcely arrived at the capital, when he was pressed to deliver a discourse at the Academy of Philosophy and Theology. He yielded to this invitation, and, having to speak before a numerous assembly, he prepared himself with care, and pronounced a learned dissertation on the most sublime questions of philosophy; but when he had finished his discourse, the audience remained cold and unmoved.

Alas! there are but too many who imitate St. Bernard in this point. Like him, they, too, know how to prepare very learned discourses; they use the most eloquent language. They may, indeed, enlighten the mind, but they do not reach the heart. The only fruits their sermons produce are a few unmeaning flatteries, which serve only to nourish their pride and self-love. "What a magnificent sermon!" the people will say. "What an eloquent speaker! What profound knowledge! What a clear mind! What a fascinating preacher! What a pleasure it is to listen to such a man! I never had such a treat in my life!" Would to God these preachers would imitate St. Bernard in his preparation for his second discourse! How different would be the fruit of their labors! When this saint had finished his first discourse, and saw how his audience remained cold and unmoved, he withdrew in sadness and confusion; he shut himself up in an oratory, where he sighed and wept abundantly before God. On the morrow, St. Bernard presented himself again in the same school: "But this time," says the author of the Exordium of Citeaux, "the Holy Ghost spoke by his mouth, and guided his lips; and the admirable discourse which he pronounced made such an impression, that many ecclesiastics, being deeply moved by it, placed themselves under his direction, and followed him to Clairvaux, there to serve God under his guidance."

It is related, in the life of this saint, that mothers used to keep their children, wives their husbands, and friends their friends, from listening to him, because the Holy Ghost gave so great a power to his words, that no one could resist them; every one felt inspired to follow him, or at least to lead a better life.

After John Tauler had shone in the pulpit for many years, and won applause in Cologne and all Germany, he suddenly retreated to his cell, leaving the people astonished at his disappearance. The fact was, an unknown man accosted him after one of his discourses, and asked permission to speak his mind regarding him. Tauler having given this permission, the unknown replied: "There lives in your heart a secret pride: you rely on your great learning and your title of doctor. In the study of letters you do not seek God or his glory with a pure intention, you seek only yourself in the passing applause of creatures. Therefore the wine of heavenly doctrine and the divine word, though pure and excellent in themselves, lose their strength when passing through your heart, and drop without savor or grace into the breast that loves God." (Tauler's life, by Darius, B. D.) Tauler was magnanimous enough to listen to these words; and assuredly no one would have ventured so to address him, had he not deserved it. He kept silence. The vanity of his present life was apparent to him. Withdrawn from all commerce with the world, he abstained for two years from preaching or hearing confessions, night and day an assiduous attendant at every conventual exercise, and passing the remainder of his time in his cell, deploring his sins and studying Jesus Christ. After two years, Cologne learned that Doctor Tauler was to preach once more. The entire city repaired to the church, curious to penetrate the mystery of a retirement which had been variously explained; but when he ascended the pulpit, after vain struggles to speak, tears were the only thing he could bring from his heart: he was now not merely an orator, he was a saint.

Let us hear what the saints say in reference to mere worldly wisdom. "You must consider," says St. Vincent de Paul, "that learning without humility has always done great harm to the Church; that pride has always brought the greater part of learned men, like the rebellious angels, to everlasting perdition. God does not need learned men to carry out his wise designs. Generally speaking, he makes use of the simple to convert men, and procure the welfare of his Church. This we see in the case of the apostles, and, in recent times, of St. Catharine of Sienna and of St. Teresa:" and, I may add, in our own days, of the Curé of Ars, in France. St. Ignatius Loyola says: "It is of greater importance for students to advance in virtue than in science; if they cannot do both at the same time, virtue must have the preference: *Minus scientiæ, plus virtutis.*" (Life, by C. Genelli).

St. Francis of Assisium said to those who wished to enter his order, and had already completed their course of studies, and wished to apply themselves solely to the study of Holy Scripture: "I am well pleased with such, provided, according to the example of Jesus Christ, who seems to have devoted more time to prayer than to anything else, they do not neglect the exercise of prayer, and endeavor rather to practise what they have learned than to learn new things, which they will probably never practise. The truths of the Gospel are better understood by those who practise them than by those who know them, but neglect to put them into practice. A man possesses knowledge and eloquence only in proportion as he practises what he knows and teaches. Many think they will find happiness in acquiring great learning; but truly happy is he only who knows Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Studies, undertaken with a view to gain the applause of men, were always an abomination in the eyes of this great saint. He used to say of these vain men, that, on the day of retribution, they would find their hands empty; that they should rather strive now to acquire solid virtue and advance in the grace of God: for the time will come when books and worldly learning will be rejected as useless. You should therefore earnestly endeavor, beloved brethren, to acquire the virtues of humility, simplicity, prayer, and the love of holy poverty. This is the only sure way of edifying your neighbor, and of procuring his salvation; for you are called to imitate Jesus Christ, who did not point out to us any other road to heaven. Many abandon these virtues, under the specious pretext of edifying their neighbor by their learning; but they are greatly deceived if they think that, by great learning alone, they can fill the hearts of their fellow-men with light, devotion, and love for God. Learning only puffs up such vain men, and extinguishes the love of God in their hearts. Hence it usually comes to pass that, after having wasted their time in useless studies, instead of striving to live up to the spirit of their vocation, they will find themselves incapable of returning to their original fervor.

Father John de Starchia, Provincial of the Friars Minors in Lombardy, having been upbraided in vain by St. Francis of Assisium for introducing an excessive application to study, and making regulations more promotiv of science than of piety, was publicly cursed by this saint, and deposed at the ensuing chapter. The saint, on being entreated to withdraw this curse, and give his blessing to brother John, who was a learned nobleman, answered: "I cannot bless him whom the Lord has cursed:" a dreadful reply, which was soon after verified. This unfortunate man died exclaiming, "I am damned and cursed for all eternity." Some frightful circumstances, which took place after his death, confirmed this fearful prediction.

St. Francis was by no means averse to the acquisition of learning; on the contrary, he exhorted those of his brethren, whose duty it was to teach, to apply themselves diligently to study. But he never ceased to oppose that vain and worldly wisdom which is always without devotion, and which preaches itself instead of Jesus Christ crucified. He often repeated these words of Holy Writ: "Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and worked many miracles in thy name? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matt. vii, 22).

St. Francis knew full well that man is naturally more inclined to learn the truth than to practise it, and that virtue, which purifies the soul, is far more precious and far more necessary than learning, which enlightens the mind.

St. Alphonsus speaks in the same manner: "The apostle

St. Paul," says he, "wrote of the world's wisdom: 'Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. If any man think he knoweth anything, he hath not yet known as he ought to know.' (1 Cor, vii, 1.) Knowledge, united to the love of God, is most useful to us and to our neighbor; but if charity does not accompany it, it does us much harm, by making us proud, and leading us to despise others: 'For the Lord is merciful to the humble, but he resisteth the proud.' Happy is the man to whom God has given the science of the saints. This science he gave to the righteous Abel, upon whom, as Holy Scripture assures us, 'he bestowed the knowledge of the holy things.' (Wisd. x, 10.) The Holy Spirit speaks of the science of the saints as being the greatest of all gifts. How many do we not see who are puffed up on account of their knowledge of mathematics, philology, archæology, and philosophy! But what does religion gain by their knowledge? What gain do so many learned men derive from all their knowledge, if they have not yet even learned how to love God and to practise virtue? The Lord refuses his light to those wise ones of the world who labor only to gain the applause of men, and he grants his gifts only to the pure and simple of heart. 'I confess to thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,' says our divine Saviour, 'because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones.' (Matt. xi, 25.) 'Happy is he,' says St. Augustine, 'who knows God, his greatness and his goodness, though he be ignorant of all besides: for he who knows God cannot help loving him. Now, he who loves is wiser than all the learned of the earth who know not how to love. The ignorant arise and win heaven.' How many ignorant people, how many poor peasants, sanctify themselves daily, and gain eternal life! St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: 'I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' Happy are we if we acquire the knowledge of Jesus Christ, of the love he has shown us on the cross!

"We must study, it is true, because we are laborers; but we ought to be fully convinced that the one thing needful, which Jesus Christ requires above everything else, is, that we should strive to be saved as saints. We must study, but the sole object of our studies ought to be to please God; otherwise they will cause us to remain longer in purgatory, nay, may even cause some of us—which may God forbid!—to be cast in the everlasting flames of hell. Let your aim, then, always be the glory of God and the salvation of souls; and when an opportunity of appearing ignorant occurs, do not recoil from it."

St. Alphonsus wrote to his students, after the departure of a certain professor, who had introduced among them an excessive application to study: "I am not sorry when I see you retrench your studies, and give more time to prayer. We have been called to succor poor destitute souls: we have therefore more need of sanctity than of science. If we are not holy, we are exposed to the danger of falling into a thousand imperfections. I repeat it once more, if you retrench somewhat your studies in order to apply yourselves more diligently to prayer, far from being sorry, I shall, on the contrary, feel greatly consoled." (Life, by Father Tanoja, vol. v, p. 34.)

An ecclesiastical student, then, must bear in mind that knowledge without the love of God is nothing but "as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal:" "If I speak the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. xiii, 1.) The venerable Father Alvarez, S. J., took all possible care that study should not weaken the piety of the students under his charge. To succeed in this, he adopted the following means:—

Above all, he inculcated on the students such striking truths as these: "Virtue and knowledge are the two trees planted by God in paradise; they are the two great luminaries created by God to give light to the world; they are the two Testaments, the Old and New; they are the two sisters, Martha and Mary, living under one roof in great union and harmony, and mutually supporting each other. Holiness gives to knowledge authority and solidity. The apostle St. Paul writes to his disciple Timothy: 'Take heed to thyself and to doctrine; for, in doing this, thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.'" (Tim. iv, 16.) Commenting on this advice of St. Paul, Father Alvarez says: "We acquire knowledge in proportion as we endeavor to acquire virtue. Who is there that does not know that knowledge is a gift of God, and that God bestows this gift upon us in proportion as we purify our hearts? An ecclesiastical student, then, should make greater efforts to avoid sin and correct his faults, than to study learned authors and peruse many books."

This zealous director of souls was also very careful to inspire the students with love of mortification, as a powerful means to make them advance both in perfection and science. "But some will ask," says he, "how can mortification be a means of advancing in science? All I answer is, try it, and you will experience that there is nothing which removes all difficulties more surely than mortification. By the practice of mortification you will easily overcome the inordinate desire to study at the time when you are engaged in prayer. Mortification will teach you to overcome your pride, when you feel offended at some question of the professor, or at the objections of your fellow-students. Mortification will induce you to apply yourselves only to such branches of science as are assigned to you, and to learn only what is useful, and not what nourishes curiosity. If you love mortification, you will prefer the views of your professor to your own, that is, provided they are not evidently against faith and morals. This was the advice of St. Augustine, who says: 'That student knows much, who knows how to profit by the teachings of his professor.' As the professor is gifted with knowledge, so must the student be endowed with docility. It belongs to the professor to judge what is fit for him, and to point out the studies best calculated to cultivate his mind.

"The spirit of mortification will prevent you from boasting of your knowledge before others; it will teach you to study diligently, and to overcome all dislike and weariness in your studies; it will enable you to study without too great haste. There is no greater obstacle to the acquisition of solid science than over-great haste in studying: this over-great haste will cause you to study everything superficially. As discretion is a virtue, so is too great eagerness a fault which must be avoided: *Sapere, et sapere ad sobrietatem!* The spirit of mortification will enable you to overcome that foolish shame which you may feel in asking for an explanation when you are in doubt; it will also teach you to be diligent in taking notes of whatever you may find of utility in the books which you read, or in the observations of your professor: '*Multa scribendo didici*,' says St. Augustine. It will keep you from reading books which are forbidden by your professor, and which would only take away your mind from your study. 'To study well,' says St. Bernard, 'we must know the true end for which we study. We must not study in order to nourish our vainglory or to gratify our curiosity; but we must study in order to sanctify ourselves, and to edify our neighbor. There are some who wish to know merely for the sake of knowing: this is detestable curiosity. Others wish to know in order to become known: this is execrable vanity. Others, again, study in order to sell their science: this is filthy lucre. But there are others who study in order to be able to edify their fellow-men: this is charity. Others, again, study in order to edify themselves: this is wisdom. The two latter classes of students only do not abuse knowledge; for they study only to do good.'" (Serm. 26, in Cant.)

Father Alvarez also made every effort to inspire the students with a great love for prayer, as he knew, by his own experience, that it is a most efficacious means of making rapid progress in science and in virtue. His modesty would not allow him to speak of himself; hence he used to cite to his students the example of the Abbot Theodore, who, as Cassian assures us, had acquired great learning, more by assiduous application to prayer, and by purifying his heart, than by studying many books. One day this holy abbot, wishing to find out the meaning of a certain passage of Holy Scripture, began to study diligently; but all his efforts were in vain. At last he commenced to pray for light, and instantly he understood its meaning. (Life of Father Alvarez.)

St. Thomas Aquinas confessed, publicly, that he owed his wisdom more to prayer than to his efforts in studying. There are numerous examples of this kind to be found in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert. In our own time we have, in the Curé of Ars, a most striking proof of the wonderful power of prayer in enlightening the understanding. How could this man, who, on account of his want of talent, had so much difficulty in being admitted into the seminary, and had, since his promotion to the priesthood, spent all his time in prayer and in the labors of the confessional,—how, I ask, could he have acquired the power to teach like one of the fathers of the Church? Whence did he derive his astonishing knowledge of God, of nature, and of the human soul? How came it that his thoughts and expressions so often coincided with those of the greatest minds in the Church—of a St. Augustine, a St. Bernard, a St. Thomas Aquinas? The Spirit of God was pleased to engrave on the heart of this holy priest all that he should know and teach to others. His lively faith was the great fountain-head whence he drew all his wisdom. His book was the death and the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him all other science was vain and useless. He sought wisdom, not amid the dusty tomes of libraries, not in the schools of philosophy, but in prayer, kneeling at his Master's feet, and covering these divine feet with his kisses and tears. It was in the presence of his divine Lord, hidden in the sacrament of his love, that he learned all his wisdom. Prayer, then, is certainly a most powerful means to acquire true and solid wisdom. "If any one wants wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and it shall be given to him." (James i, 5.)

In order to be able to draw souls to God, we ourselves must first be united to God. Now, it is especially in prayer that God unites the soul to himself. We see, in the lives of St. Dominic, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis Regis, St. Alphonsus, St. Leonard of Port-Maurice, that these holy men, after having labored during the day for the salvation of souls, were wont, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, to spend the greater part of the night in prayer. St. Francis de Sales declared that the Masses and prayers which he offered up for the inhabitants of Chablais contributed more toward their conversion than all his learning. "The apostles," said he, "never preached the word of God without having first offered up most fervent prayers to heaven. He is greatly mistaken who expects to convert infidels, heretics, or other great sinners, by any other means than those which Jesus Christ and his apostles employed: it is God alone who, by his grace, changes the hearts of men, and for this grace we can never pray too fervently."

"The labors of a priest who is not given to prayer," says St. Vincent de Paul, "will produce little or no good; whilst, on the contrary, a priest who is given to prayer can easily move the hearts of his hearers, and convert even the most hardened sinners. Yes, give me a man of prayer, and all his efforts will be crowned with success. He will be able to say with St. Paul: 'I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me!' Prayer is the grand fountain-head from which he can derive true eloquence to inspire the hearts of the people with horror of sin and love of virtue." Indeed, the priest who diligently practises prayer may say with our Lord Jesus Christ: "I speak that which I have seen with my Father." (John viii, 38.) He can also say with St. John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, . . . we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship may be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i, 1–3.)

The Curé of Ars is a most admirable example of this truth. When the people heard this saintly priest, who made no pretensions to learning, speak of heaven, of the sacred humanity of our Lord, of his sorrowful passion, his real presence in the most holy sacrament of the altar; when they heard him discourse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of her mercy and her greatness; when they heard him speak of the happiness of the saints, the purity of the angels, the beauty of a pure soul, the dignity of man—of all those subjects which were familiar to him; when the people, I say, heard this saintly priest speak of all these subjects, they generally came away from the discourse quite convinced that the good father had seen the things of which he spoke with such fulness of heart, with such lively emotions, and with such an abundance of tears. Indeed, his words then bore the impress of divine tenderness; they penetrated the heart with a warmth and an unction which were indescribable. There was so extraordinary a majesty, so marvellous a power, in his voice, in his gestures, and in his looks, that it was impossible to listen to him without being moved.

Views and sentiments which are imparted to the soul by God, produce an impression far different from those which are acquired by study. Doubt gave way, even in the most darkened mind, to the absolute certainty of faith. The words of the Curé of Ars were the more efficacious, because he preached from his inmost heart. His very appearance was a living proof of the truth of what he said. It could be truly said of him, that he was able to convince men even by his silence. When you saw that pale and emaciated face in the pulpit; when you heard that shrill, piercing voice uttering such sublime thoughts, clothed in the most simple and popular language, you naturally fancied yourself in the presence of one of those great characters spoken of in the Bible. You already felt yourself filled with respect and confidence, and disposed not to criticise his words, but to profit by them.

To those to whom it was given to be present at his instructions, two things were equally remarkable—the preacher and the hearer. They were not the words that the preacher gave forth—it was more than words; it was a soul, a holy soul, all filled with faith and love, that poured itself out before you, of which you felt in your own soul the immediate contact and the warmth. As for the hearer, he was no longer on the earth; he was transported into those purer regions, from which dogmas and mysteries descend. As the saint spoke, new and clear views opened to the mind: heaven and earth, the present and the future life, the things of time and eternity, appeared in a light that you had never before perceived.

When a man coming fresh from the world, and bringing with him worldly ideas, feelings, and impressions, sat down to listen to his doctrine, it stunned and amazed him—it set the world so utterly at defiance, and all that the world believes, loves, and extols. At first he was astonished and thunderstruck, then by degrees he was touched, and surprised into weeping like the rest.

No eloquence has drawn forth more tears, or penetrated deeper into the hearts of men. His words opened a way before them like flames, and the most hardened hearts melted like wax before the fire. They were burning, radiating, triumphant; they did more than charm the mind;

they subdued the whole soul, and brought it back to God, not by the long and difficult way of argument, but by the paths of emotion, which lead shortly and directly to the desired end.

He was the oracle that people went to consult, that they might learn to know Jesus Christ. Not only the sinful, but the learned, not only the fervent, but the indifferent, found in it a divine unction which penetrated them, and made them long to hear it again. The oftener you heard him, the more you desired to go and hear him again and again. Nothing more clearly showed that the Curé of Ars was full of the spirit of God, who alone is greater than our heart. We may draw from his depths without ever exhausting them; and the divine satiety which he gives only excites a greater appetite.

He spoke without any other preparation than his continual union with God. He passed, without interval or delay, from the confessional to the pulpit; and yet he showed an imperturbable confidence, which sprang from complete and absolute forgetfulness of himself. Besides, no one was tempted to criticise him. People generally criticise those who are not indifferent to their opinion of them. Those who heard the Curé of Ars had something else to do—they had to pass judgment on themselves.

This real power of his word supplied in him the want of talent and rhetoric. It gave a singular majesty and an irresistible authority to the most simple things that issued from those venerable lips. He loosed his words like arrows from the bow, and his whole soul seemed to fly with them. In these effusions, the pathetic, the profound, the sublime, were often side by side with the simple and the ordinary. They had all the freedom and irregularity, but also all the originality and power, of an improvisation. Those who have sometimes tried to write down what they had just heard, found it impossible to recall the things which had most moved them, and to put them into form. What is most divine in the heart of man cannot be expressed in writing.

"Experience," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "shows us every day that a priest of moderate learning, but full of the love of Jesus Christ, converts more souls than many learned orators, whose eloquent discourses are praised by every one." St. Jerome used to say: "One single priest, inflamed with divine love, is able to convert a whole nation." "One word," says St. Alphonsus, "uttered by a priest inflamed with divine love, will produce more good than a hundred sermons composed by a learned divine who has but little love for God." "I will always repeat," says St. Francis de Sales, "that whoever preaches with love preaches sufficiently against heresy, although he may not utter a single word of controversy. During the thirty-three years that I have been in the ministry, I have always remarked that the practical sermons of a priest whose heart is filled with piety and zeal, are like so many burning coals heaped upon the heads of the enemies of our holy faith. Such sermons always edify and conciliate non-Catholics."

Now, it is not in the study of books, but in holy prayer and meditation, that the heart of the priest becomes enkindled with divine love and zeal for souls. "St. Philip Neri," says St. Alphonsus, "received far more light in the catacombs of Rome, where he spent whole nights in prayer, than in all the books which he studied; and St. Jerome acquired far greater wisdom by his meditations in the cave of Bethlehem, than by all his studies. It often happens that you learn more in one moment of prayer than in ten years' study. Now, the more ardently we love God, the greater will be our knowledge of him. It takes much time and labor to acquire profane sciences; but to acquire the science of the saints—the love of God—it suffices to will it earnestly, and to ask it perseveringly of God. The Wise Man says: 'Wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her. She anticipateth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them. He that awaketh early to seek her shall not labor, for he finds her sitting at his door!' (Wisd. vi, 13–16.) This wisdom, or love of God, as St. James the Apostle assures us (chap. v, 1), must be sought for in prayer."

St. Paulinus reproached Jovian, a Christian philosopher, for spending so much time in studying the works of philosophy, whilst he neglected to advance in virtue. Jovian excused himself by saying that he had no time left for prayer. "You find time," said Paulinus, "to devote to philosophy, and you find none to devote to a Christian life."

There are many students who imitate Jovian; they spend almost all their time in studying mathematics, astronomy, profane history, philosophy, and the like; and when blamed for this, they excuse themselves by saying that they have no time left for prayer and meditation. What a delusion! They find time to become learned, and they can find no time to prepare themselves for the worthy reception of holy orders! Seneca uttered a great truth, when he said: "We do not know what is necessary, because we learn what is superfluous." (De Brev. Int., chap. 1.) Most assuredly it would be much better for a student to give up studying, than to let his studies interfere with his spiritual progress.

The apostles had received the command to preach the gospel to all nations; and though they knew that preaching was of the highest importance, nevertheless they looked upon prayer as even more important still. When they saw that their occupations became too numerous, and interfered with the sacred duty of prayer, they chose seven deacons to help them in their labors. "For," said they, "we must give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts xi, 4.) They say, expressly, we must give ourselves *first* to prayer, and *then* only to the preaching of the word of God; for they knew very well that their preaching would be fruitless, unless it was accompanied by fervent prayer.

St. Teresa wrote as follows, in answer to a letter of the Bishop of Osma, who, through over-great zeal for his flock, gave but little time to prayer and meditation: "Our Lord gives me to understand that you need what is most necessary—prayer and meditation, and perseverance therein: this is the cause of the dryness of your heart." St. Bernard, too, advised Pope Eugenius never to omit prayer for the sake of exterior occupations, as otherwise his heart might become so hardened as not even to heed any longer the voice of his conscience.

Whenever St. Ignatius found that a student could not apply himself to his studies with calmness of heart, and that these studies were an obstacle to his advancement in perfection, he usually took him away from them, and made him apply himself exclusively to prayer and meditation. "It may be," said he, "that he is well able to study, but study will be hurtful to him. What does it profit a man if he gaineth the whole world, but cometh to suffer the loss of his soul?" (Life, by C. Genelli.)

St. Charles Borromeo made it a rule that a candidate for the priesthood should be asked in particular, before his ordination, whether he was in the habit of making his meditation, and in what manner he made it; and Father Avila, S. J., dissuaded every one from becoming a priest who was not given to prayer.

Indeed, a student who is not fond of meditation and prayer, will never be a good, holy priest. Woe to such a one, if, during the course of his studies, he has not always preferred prayer to all his other occupations! His heart will be like a hard, barren rock. Experience teaches that there is nothing which dries up the heart more quickly than study which is not sanctified by prayer. The heart of such a student will be like a reservoir that has a larger outlet than inlet. The dry land will soon make its appearance. Being destitute of interior lights, he will not see the necessity of sanctifying himself, nor the strict obligation he has to sanctify his fellow-men. As he cannot have a lively faith, his genuflections at the altar, when he becomes a priest, will be like the bows of an automaton. Could you see his interior dispositions, whilst celebrating the august sacrifice of the Mass, or whilst administering the sacraments, or reciting the divine office, you might be tempted to believe that you saw an actor on the stage, or a harlequin going through his rôle. His sermons and all his actions will be lifeless and mechanical.

But there is no need of heaping proofs on proofs. I will merely repeat, in conclusion, what I have said before, that a student who does not practise prayer and meditation during the course of his studies, will be unfit for ordination, and will, if he becomes a priest, not only lose his own soul, but cause the ruin of thousands of others.

CELIBACY.

CEREMONIES OF ORDINATION.

FROM the very early times of Christianity, the Western Church has required her bishops, priests, and deacons, to be unmarried men, and for some centuries has included subdeacons under the same discipline. She now will not ordain married men, much less will she suffer them to marry after ordination. She does not assert that this practice is of divine precept, or that it is otherwise than a discipline of her own. In this discipline, however, she does but imitate the apostles. St. Jerome, following Tertullian, says that the apostles "were either virgin or continent." Origen, Eusebius, St. Epiphanius, attest that the practice, established from the times of the apostles, was, that they who were admitted to the priesthood should renounce all the rights acquired by marriage. In the Second Council of Carthage, Bishop Aurelius, in confirming the decree which forbade bishops, priests, and deacons, to marry, said: "What the apostles taught, what antiquity preserved, let us also maintain." Pope Siricius, in 385, urged the execution of this law, which he called *apostolic*, and punished those who transgressed it. St. Innocent I and St. Leo did the same. During the fourth and fifth centuries, the Councils of Eliberis, of Turin, of Carthage, of Toledo, etc., insisted on the faithful observance of the *ancient* law, attributed to St. Peter. Never has incontinence been permitted to pass unpunished in the Latin Church. There are, indeed, the strongest reasons for enforcing the law of continence.

Celibacy is a more perfect state than that of marriage; and the clergy ought to be examples of that which is most perfect. The distractions, cares, and embarrassments of the married state would interfere sadly with the duties of the priest, and prevent him from giving himself wholly to the service of God: "He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God; but he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided." (1 Cor. vii, 32, 33.)

How could the priest of Jesus Christ, obliged as he is, in an especial manner, to prayer, to study, to intimate communion with God, to the celebration of the holy sacrifice, to alms, to visiting the sick, to instructing the young, to the exercise of zeal, and to the propagation of faith,—how could he, I say, be dispensed from observing a law which even the world imposes on military men or on sailors, on most domestic servants and on teachers—which Napoleon inserted among the regulations of his university?

An objection is drawn from political interest. Marriage, they say, would interest the clergy much more in the material progress of their country. Yes, but on the condition of enslaving the priesthood, of enervating it, of placing it in the most absolute dependence on those who dispense endowments, of making it a sacerdotal caste, taken up with the things of time more than with the great concerns of eternity: "If the salt," says our Lord, "lose its savor, it is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot."

It has also been said that the marriage of ecclesiastics would prevent certain evils. With M. de Maistre we reply, that "the indisputable superiority of the Catholic clergy is due in great measure to the law of celibacy;" that the best preservative against incontinence is the habit of chastity acquired in youth; that marriage exposes to temptations much more varied and more violent than virginity vowed to God; that, besides, nothing could be more opposed to common-sense and the general good than to suppress a law which is essentially useful, under the pretext of preventing transgressions of it. This false principle would begin by destroying entirely all legislation respecting marriage; in order to prevent adultery, it would permit polygamy, etc.

Besides, no one is forced to bind himself to this life of abnegation and sacrifice in the priesthood. The bishop takes care to say to the candidates for subdeaconship:—

"My dearest sons, you who are to be promoted to the holy order of subdeacons, should consider carefully, again and again, what that burden is which you are desirous to carry from this day forward. Up to the present time you have been free, and you have it still in your power to return to the pursuits of the world; but, after receiving these orders, you will no longer be free to renounce your resolutions. You must forever be the servants of God, whose service is royal dignity; and it will be your duty, by his help, to preserve chastity, and to be bound forever to the ministry of the Church. Consider therefore, while there is time; and if you resolve to persevere in your holy purpose, then draw near in the name of God."

The step is taken. The Levite has renounced the world and himself. At this solemn moment he falls, struck dead, as it were, on the pavement of the temple, and the whole Church militant adjures the Church triumphant to assist him with their prayers, and humbly entreats the Lord graciously to bless, sanctify, and consecrate those whom he has chosen, and who are thus prostrate at his feet.

After certain intervals of time, which have been wisely regulated by the Church laws, and called *interstices*, the day arrives on which the Levite, who has given to the Church pledges of his future fidelity, is to be promoted to the priesthood. "Most Rev. Father," says the archdeacon to the bishop, "our holy Mother, the Catholic Church, calls on you to ordain these deacons here present to the office and duty of the priesthood." This question is made, to show that the ordination of candidates for the priesthood is not merely at their own request, which would be dangerous; but that the Church considers them worthy, and needs their aid in the ministry.

Then the bishop asks: "Do you know that they are worthy of it?" The bishop puts this question to the archdeacon, because, formerly, and even now, where the archdeacon's functions are in practice, he had the charge of all the inferior ministers; it was his duty to inspect them, and to answer to the bishop for their conduct. He used to visit the parishes. This custom, as far as we know, is still in vigor in France. The archdeacon replies to the above question: "As far as human infirmity allows, I know and testify that they are worthy of the charge of this office." The bishop says, "Thanks be to God," and announces these good tidings to the people.

After this the Litany of the Saints is recited, to invite the Church triumphant to join the Church militant that God may shower down the abundance of his graces on those who are to be ordained.

The bishop then lays his hands on them, and after him all the priests who are present; and while all have their right hands extended over them, the bishop says:—

"Beloved brethren, let us pray to God the Father Almighty that he would multiply his heavenly gifts upon these his servants, whom he has chosen to the office of the priesthood; that, by his help, they may fulfil that which they undertake by his choice, through Christ our Lord."

Then, with his hands still extended, he chants the prayer given above in the answer to question fourth.

After this sublime prayer the bishop, sitting, vests each candidate for the priesthood with the stole and chasuble, saying: "Receive the Lord's yoke: for his yoke is sweet and his burden light. Receive the priestly robe, which is a symbol of charity: for God is able to increase in thee charity and a perfect work."

"Thanks be to God," is the response of the people. At this moment which immediately precedes the consecration, they who are present pray with the bishop, all kneeling.

The Divine Spirit is then called down by the solemn chant, *Veni Creator Spiritus.* While the clergy and people continue this affecting prayer, the candidate presents himself at the feet of the bishop, who anoints his hands with the holy oil, saying: "O Lord! vouchsafe to consecrate and sanctify these hands, by means of this anointing and of our benediction, that what they bless may be blessed, and what they consecrate may be consecrated and sanctified, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now, what does the unction of the priest's hands in ordination signify? In Holy Scripture, the grace of the Holy Ghost is sometimes called the interior unction of the Holy Ghost. Hence Jesus Christ, in whom was the plenitude of the Holy Ghost, is called *Christ*, that is, the

Anointed. Now, whatever the priests bless or consecrate, is blessed or consecrated by the grace of the Holy Ghost, which accompanies their ministry. Hence the hands of the priest are anointed, that God may fill them with the unction of his Holy Spirit, and may bless and consecrate by his grace all that the hands of his priests will bless and consecrate.

The bishop then places, in the hands of the candidate for the priesthood, the chalice containing wine and water and the paten with bread—the gifts to be consecrated—and says: "Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God for the living and the dead. In the name of the Lord."

This divine power is at once exercised. The new priest celebrates the awful mysteries together with the bishop who consecrates. He communicates with him, while the choir chants, as it were to encourage him, those beautiful words addressed by our Saviour to his apostles: "I will not now call you servants but friends, for you know all things that I have wrought among you."

After having received the *Word of God*, of which he has become the instrument, the new priest makes a profession of the faith which he is to preach everywhere, and standing before the altar, in presence of the bishop, he repeats the Apostles' Creed.

Then he kneels; and the bishop, again laying his hands on him, says: "Receive the Holy Ghost: whose sins thou forgivest, they are forgiven unto them; and whose sins thou retainest, they are retained." As now all the powers of the priesthood are conferred on him, the sacerdotal robe or chasuble is unfolded. When the bishop gives the chasuble first to the priest, it is in part folded, to indicate that he has received only power over Christ's own body, *i. e.*, to say

Mass. But the moment the bishop has said, "Whose sins you shall forgive," etc., the chasuble is unrolled in its full extent, to indicate that he has also received power over Christ's mystic body, *i. e.*, power to forgive the sins of the people, and, consequently, that the full power of the priesthood is conferred. Whilst the chasuble is being unfolded, the bishop says: "The Lord clothe thee with the robe of innocence."

Then the bishop takes the hand of the priest into his own, to show that the power of the priest should always be contained in, and directed by, that of the bishop. Whilst holding the priest's hands in his own, the bishop says: "Do you promise reverence and obedience to me and my successors?" "I promise it," says the priest. By this promise he binds himself to obedient dependence on his bishop, in everything that regards the ecclesiastical ministry. The bishop embraces him and says: "The peace of the Lord be with you forever." Then the people may joyfully exclaim:—

Hail to him whom God hath chosen,
  And his Word hath sanctified!
Priest of God thou art forever:
  May his peace with thee abide!
Wond'rous pow'r to thee is given,
  Which e'en angels dare not claim,—
Pow'r to break sin's galling fetters,
  And to cleanse each stain of shame.
  Grateful hearts shall bless thy name!

Christ's almighty word thou speakest.
  Lo, the heavens open wide,
And the blessed Lord of glory
  'Neath earth's lowly forms doth hide!

Loving angels hover round thee,
Veil their gaze in awe and fear,
Bend before the dazzling splendors
Of their God who tarries near.
Surely, heaven itself is here!

Thou dost bless the grave, the cradle –
Angel-like, thou bendest o'er
Death's sad couch, and aidest fondly
Those whom friends can aid no more.
Father of the poor and homeless,
Thou dost dry the hidden tear,
Thou givest light when all is darkness:
Where thou art, there God is near.
Bliss be thine in heaven and here!

7. What do the people owe to their priests?

Respect, love, and obedience.

When our dear Saviour Jesus Christ was living on earth, he was accused of the worst crimes. He was accused by the high-priests and the doctors of the law, to whom it belonged to pronounce who was the Messias. He was accused before an idolatrous judge, in the presence of all the people. He was treated as a blasphemer, as one possessed by the devil, as a lover of wine, as a destroyer of the Temple, as a seducer of the people, as a rebel, as a seditious man, who gave to himself the title of king, who forbade the payment of tribute to Cæsar, and who wished to destroy the Jewish nation. If ever infamous calumny was carried to excess, it was undoubtedly in regard to our divine Saviour Jesus Christ, "who knew not sin," who had never uttered a deceitful word, who "did all things well," and who "passed his life in doing good, and healing all kinds of infirmities."

Now, Jesus Christ continues to live in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the pope, the bishops and priests.

He has made a prediction to his apostles and their successors, which has come true in all ages, and which will be verified to the end of the world. He said to them: "The servant is not greater than his lord: if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John xv, 20.) This prediction of our Lord Jesus Christ has been especially verified in our own century. See how the enemies of Jesus Christ treated our late Holy Father, Pius IX; see how they massacred the Archbishop of Paris, and many of his clergy, in cold blood! *The Pope! the Pope! The Priest! the Priest!* This has ever been the cry of all the wicked: and what fancies has it not conjured up? Some, when they only hear the word "pope" or "priest," turn up their eyes in horror, and shrink back as if they had suddenly encountered an evil genius. Others, at the mere sound of the word "pope" or "priest," become as rabid as a dog stricken with hydrophobia when he sees water. They grind their teeth, they froth and foam at the mouth, they tremble with rage, and seem as if they would tear into pieces all the popes and priests that have ever lived from Peter to the present day.

Others shake their heads with an air of majesty, as if they would say: "How can we get over the pope—over the priesthood of the Catholic Church?" Like a divine stigma, the world's hatred is impressed on the brow of the pope, of the bishops and priests of the Church. The spirit of the world, the spirit of falsehood and of negation, hates the pope, the Vicar of Christ; it hates all our Lord's true ministers, the Catholic bishops and priests, with demoniacal hatred. Why? Because they are the palladium of truth and of public and private morality—the root and bond of charity and of faith.

The spirit of the world hates the pope, it hates the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church, because they love justice and hate iniquity. But it is for this very reason that they will remain forever: for, truth and justice being, in the end, always victorious, the pope, together with the Catholic bishops and priests, will not cease to bless and to triumph. All the works of the earth have perished; time has obliterated them. The priesthood of the Catholic Church remains, because the Church remains; and it will endure until the Church passes from her earthly exile to her country in heaven.

Human theories and systems have flitted across her path like birds of night, but have vanished; numberless sects have, like so many waves, dashed themselves to froth against this rock, or, recoiling, have been lost in the vast ocean of forgetfulness. Kingdoms and empires that once existed in inimitable worldly grandeur, are no more; dynasties have died out, and have been replaced by others. Thrones and sceptres and crowns have withstood the priesthood of the Church; but, immutable, like God, who laid its foundation, it is the firm, unshaken centre round which the weal and the woe of nations move: weal, if they adhere to it; woe, if they separate from it. If the world takes from the pope, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church, the cross of gold, they will bless the world with one of wood. If necessary, popes, bishops and priests can suffer and die for the welfare of the world, as Jesus suffered and died. The priesthood of the Catholic Church is immortal.

We cannot but smile when we hear men talk of the downfall of the priesthood. What could hell and its agents do more than they have already done for its destruction?

They have employed tortures for the body, but they could not reach the spirit; they have tried heresy, or the denial of revealed truth, to such an extent that we cannot see room for any new heresy; they have, by the hand of schism, torn whole countries from the unity of the Church; but what she lost on one side of the globe, she gained tenfold on the other. All these have ignominiously failed to verify the prophecies of hell, that "the priesthood of the Church shall fall."

Look, for instance, at the tremendous effort of the so-called glorious Reformation, together with its twin sister—the unbelief of the nineteenth century. Whole legions of church reformers, together with armies of philosophers armed with negation and a thousand-and-one systems of paganism, rushed on against the chair of Peter, and swore that the Papacy would fall, and with it the whole hierarchy of the Church. Three hundred years are over, and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church is still alive, and, to all appearances, more vigorous than ever. The nations have proved that they can get along very well without reformers, but not without the pope, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church. Men are foolish enough to dream of the destruction of the Catholic priesthood. A great statesman of France said, not long ago, that those who tried to swallow it always died of indigestion. Let the enemies of the pope, and of the Catholic bishops and priests, beware: if they dash their heads against the rock, they must not be astonished to find them broken.

The whole priesthood of the Catholic Church is a grand fact in history,—a fact so great, that there would be no history without it; a fact permanent, repeating itself perpetually, entering into the concerns of all the nations on the face of the earth, appearing again and again on the records of time, and benefiting, perceived or unperceived, directly or indirectly, socially, morally, and supernaturally, every individual who forms part of the great organism of human society.

Around the Catholic priesthood human society moves, like a wheel around its axle; on it society depends for its support, its life, its energy, like the planetary system of the sun. To try to get rid of it, is to hasten the end of the world. For the principal end of the creation of the universe is Jesus Christ, who came into it, and stays in it, through the Catholic priesthood, for the justification and glorification of the elect. "*Ordo enim naturæ creatus est et institutus propter ordinem gratiæ*," says St. Thomas Aquinas. By trying, then, to abolish the priesthood, the wicked try to banish Christ from this world; and, by banishing him, they destroy the end for which the world was created: as soon as this end ceases, the world itself will cease. Hence, the worst enemies of the world are those who work directly or indirectly against the priesthood. The less the priesthood is believed, the more it is despised and ridiculed, the more its divine authority is undermined and weakened, the more also the number of the elect will diminish; and the faster their number diminishes, the quicker the end of the world will approach. Woe, therefore, terrible woe, to all those who are enemies of the Catholic priesthood!

There are instances of frightful punishment on record, which Almighty God has inflicted on those who were irreverent to priests. Theodoret, Bishop of Cirus, in Philot, relates that St. James, Bishop of Nissibe, before he was consecrated bishop, went into Persia to visit the Christians of that country. As he passed by a fountain, certain females, who were washing clothes, treated him with great disrespect. The saint raised his eyes to heaven to recommend himself to God, and, by a divine inspiration, cursed the fountain, and it dried up instantly. He then cursed the insolence of the girls. Immediately their hair became quite white, and remained so to the end of their life, as a proof of the respect which is due to priests. Beware, therefore, of ever showing the slightest disrespect to a priest; for, to disrespect the priest is to disrespect Jesus Christ, whose place he takes on earth: "He who despiseth you" (the priest), says Jesus Christ, "despiseth me; and he who thus despises me, despises my heavenly Father, who sent me." Never associate with those who speak against the priests or ridicule them; otherwise, the punishment of Core, Dathan, and Abiron, will come upon you. Imitate rather the angels and saints in their respect and love for the priesthood.

St. Francis de Sales saw the guardian angel of a young priest whom he had ordained, go in advance to the right of the priest, before his ordination; but, after his ordination, the angel went to the left of the priest and followed him.

The Emperor Constantine the Great held the bishops and priests in such respect, that he would not sit down in the Council of Nice, till after all the bishops had been seated; and, even then, he sat only upon a seat below them all. Wenceslaus, King of Poland, would not even sit down in the presence of a priest. St. Catharine of Sienna, and Mary of Oignies, kissed the ground on which a priest had walked.

St. Francis of Assisium said that, if he saw an angel from heaven and a priest, he would first bow to the priest and then to the angel; for the angel is the friend of God, but the priest holds his place.

To inflame you with similar respect and love for priests, and to show your respect and love to them by ready obedience to their teaching, I wish you to remember that the Catholic priest stands conspicuous in the midst of his people, not merely as the celebrator of the rites of divine worship, not merely as the minister of the sacraments, not merely as the preacher of God's holy word; but he stands also, conspicuous in the midst of his people, as the companion of their hardships, as the soother of their afflictions, as the guardian of their interests, as the trustee of their hearts, and as the sentinel of their death-bed.

From his youth, the priest renounces the glory and honors of this world. He bids an eternal farewell to family pleasures, and to a thousand enjoyments that are permitted to others, in order to sacrifice himself freely for the good of his fellow-men—to be their father and best friend. The priest generally spends, previous to his ordination, from about ten to twelve years in hard studies, which often undermine his health and weary his mind. And for whose benefit is it that he undertakes so many difficult studies during the best part of his life? It is for the benefit of the people; it is to enable himself to teach and guide aright, in the pathway to heaven, all those who will be placed under his spiritual direction. After his ordination, the priest spends all the days of his life in the service of his neighbor. On Sundays you see him, for your temporal and spiritual welfare, at the altar, or in the pulpit, or in the confessional. On week-days you may see him, early in the morning, raising his hands to God in prayer, in offering the atoning sacrifice for the people; and the man of charity, the priest of God, spends the remainder of the day in preparing his sermons, in instructing the children in school in their catechism, in relieving the poor, in visiting the sick, in wiping away the tears of the unfortunate, in causing the tears of repentance to flow, in instructing the ignorant, in strengthening the weak, and in encouraging the good in the practice of virtue.

Go through the streets of any of our cities or towns. Enter the huts of the poor. Ask them who gave them the alms that keep them from death and despair, and they will tell you that it was the priest, or some charitable soul guided by the zeal of the priest.

Go to the sick-bed; draw near the bedside of that poor wretch whom every one has forsaken; ask him who is the consoling angel that pours upon his weary heart the balm of hope and consolation, and he will tell you it is the Roman Catholic priest. About twenty years ago, when the French troops were encamped around Gallipolis, the cholera burst suddenly upon them. They were unprepared for that terrible visitor. Father Gloriot, S. J., was alone in an army of ten thousand men. "I was obliged," says he, "to hear their confessions on my knees, and stooping by their couches. Indeed, I learned then that, to save souls for Jesus Christ, it is necessary to undergo, with him, the double agony of mind and body. Yet my greatest trial was my loneliness. I was alone; I had not had the consolation of confession for six weeks past; everybody died around me, and, should I be taken sick, there was none to assist me in my dying hour. But God, in his mercy, preserved me, that I might attend to the wants of souls so well prepared. The trials were certainly great, but great were also the consolations. Whenever I entered those places of desolation I was hailed from all parts—'Chaplain, here, come here to me! Make haste to reconcile me to God! I have only a few moments to live!' Some would press my hand to their hearts, and say, with grateful feelings: 'How providential for us that you are here! Were you not with us, who would console us in our last moments?'"

Enter the dark and mouldy dungeon where the unhappy prisoner pines away in weary captivity; ask him who it is that lightens his chains, and makes his prison walls look less dreary, and he will tell you it is the priest of the Catholic Church.

Go upon the scaffold, where the wretched criminal is about to expiate his crime. Who is it that stands at his side, and strips death of its terrors? It is again the priest. With one hand the priest shows the dying man the cross, the hope of the repentant sinner, and, with the other, he points to heaven, that blessed home where the weary find rest.

In 1851, a murder was committed near Paris, in France. A captain of the carabineers, an excellent officer, beloved by all, going, as usual, the rounds of the stables, had reprimanded one of the troopers, whose conduct had not been very regular. The latter made no reply, but turned away with, apparently, a calm countenance, and went up to the mess-room. There he loaded one of his horse-pistols, and, going back to the stable, approached his captain, and, with a deadly aim, discharged the arm against the loins of the officer.

The unfortunate man fell, weltering in blood. They took him up, carried him to his room, and the surgeons pronounced the wound mortal. In fact, the poor captain breathed his last, a few hours after, in the arms of his old mother, in the midst of horrible sufferings, endured heroically, and with sentiments of faith and charity truly admirable. He had made his confession with great piety, had received the Blessed Sacrament, and, in imitation of his divine Master praying on the cross for his crucifiers, had pardoned his murderer, and begged for his pardon with the most touching and pressing appeal.

The murderer had been arrested on the spot, and transferred to the prison in Paris. There he was abandoned by all, except by the priest. Two or three days after the deed had been committed, the priest went to see the trooper, for the first time, in the cell of the military prison. He encouraged him to hope in the mercy of God, and to prepare himself for a good confession, and to accept death in expiation of his crime. The poor criminal was touched by the words of the priest, and said: "I have been the victim of a moment of fury and insanity. It was a punishment from God, whom I had abandoned. Had I always prayed as I do now, I should not have come to this pass. My father said to me often: 'Fear God, and pray to him: he alone is good, all the rest are nothing!' But it is so hard to do so at the regiment; we are always surrounded by young men who say nothing but what is bad." When he heard that he was sentenced to death, he exclaimed: "The sentence is just: to appeal would be going against the goodness of God. They would show me a mercy that I do not wish for, because the punishment must be undergone. I must atone for what I have done. My hopes are no longer here below: I have only God now to look to. He is now everything to me; in him alone do I trust; I feel quite calm; I feel no rebellion in my heart; I am perfectly resigned to the will of God."

Now, what brought about that calmness, that happiness, in this poor prisoner? It was his sincere confession which the priest was kind enough to hear; it was holy communion, which the priest brought to him several times; in a word, it was the charity of the priest, who often went to see him in his prison, in order to console him, and to inspire him with great confidence in the mercy of God.

During the three hours and a half of the drive to the place of execution, he never lost his calmness: God was with him in the person of the priest, who accompanied him to the Savory Plains, where he was to be shot. What a touching spectacle: to behold, on a wagon, a tall man, the culprit, followed by the priest of God; to see how the priest was even paler than the culprit: and to see them walking side by side, you would think that *he* was the one to be shot!

The expression of the culprit's countenance evinced great calmness and resignation; his eyes betrayed, at once, sorrow and hope. He seemed to pray with fervor. There was no sadness in his looks; there could even be seen the reflections of a certain inward joy. He listened, with love and deep attention, to the words addressed to him by the minister of Jesus Christ. When the priest said to him, "Our Lord is between us two: my poor child, we are always well when the good Saviour is with us," he replied: "Oh, yes, my heart is perfectly happy. I did not think I should tell you, but I feel as if I was going to a wedding. God has permitted all this for my good, to save my soul. I feel so much consoled, thinking that my poor captain died a good Christian! I am going to see him: he is praying for me now. My God has saved me; I feel that he will have mercy on me. He ascended Calvary, carrying his cross: I accompany him. I shall not resist whatever they wish to do with me—tie me, or bandage my eyes. Ah! the poor soldiers are lost because they do not listen to you priests. Without you, without religion, the whole world would be lost!"

When they drove by the barracks, where he had committed the murder, he offered a prayer for his captain. "I can't conceive how I could have done it! I had no ill-will against him! Could the commission of a sin save me from being shot, I would not commit it: I think so now. I have nothing to keep me here: I am going to see God!"

When they had arrived at the place of execution, the priest and the culprit alighted. An officer read the sentence. The culprit replied: "I acknowledge the justice of my punishment; I am sorry for what I have done; I beg of God to pardon me: I love him with all my heart!" Then he knelt; the priest gave him the crucifix to kiss, for the last time. "My father," he said, with feeling expression,—"my father, I place my soul within your hands; I unite my death with that of my Saviour Jesus. Farewell! farewell!" The priest embraced him once more. Then, with his arms extended in the form of a cross, the culprit inclined his head, and awaited his death. The priest retired to pray at some distance. One minute after, human justice had been satisfied, and the soul of the unfortunate soldier, purified and transformed by religion, had fled to the bosom of Him who pardons all those who repent. The priest resumed his place by him, and, with tears in his eyes, prayed, on his knees, for the departed soul of the unfortunate carabineer.

Go where you will, through all the miseries of this life, and you will find that everywhere the consoling angel of

God, the father of the poor and friendless, is the priest of the Catholic Church. He labors day and night, without boasting, without praise, and often without any other reward, in this life, than contempt and ingratitude. If a dangerous disease breaks out in the parish, the priest does not abandon the post of danger. No, the Catholic priest is no coward, the Catholic priest is no hireling. Devoted and fearless, he remains to encourage his flock, to give them the last sacraments, and, if need be, even to die with them.

A poor man is dying in his wretched hovel. In the midst of the winter's night the priest hears a knock at his door; he is told that one of his flock requires his assistance. The bleak winter wind howls around him, the chilling rain beats pitilessly in his face, yet he hurries on: there is a soul to save, there is a soul to aid in its fearful death-struggle: that makes him forget everything else. At last he enters the house of death; he enters the sick man's room, though he knows that the very air of that room is loaded with pestilence. He receives the last whisper of the dying man; he breathes into his ear the sweet words of pardon and of peace. He bends over the sick man's infected body, and breathes the tainted breath from his impoisoned lips. The priest is willing to risk his own life, provided he can save the soul of his fellow-man.

During the Crimean War, the cholera raged in the division of Herbillon. The soldiers became restless; they looked gloomy and spoke despondingly, because the victims were many, and it was not the kind of death a soldier likes. What troubled the soldiers most, was the prevailing thought that the plague was communicated by contact; and there was great dejection in camp. "What shall we do, Monsieur l'Abbé?" said the general to Father Parabère. "Those boys look as if they were frightened." "Oh, it is necessary to let that fear know that it has to attack Frenchmen and Christians: leave it to me, general." And the dauntless priest walks straight to the very quarters where the pest raged most furiously. A poor soldier was in the last convulsions, and in the throes of his agony. The heroic priest had still time left to console and to absolve him, and then he closed his eyes. Then he called all the comrades of the dead man around his couch, and endeavored to persuade them that the scourge was not contagious; but as some of them shook their heads, he added: "You will not believe me to-day, you shall to-morrow." And just think of it, the brave priest lies down on the same couch with the man dead of cholera, and prepares himself to pass the night with that novel bedfellow! Many hours passed away, and Père Parabère, who certainly had worked enough during the day to need rest, did not quit his post until he was called to prepare another man for death. On the morrow, the whole camp had heard of it, and the soldiers, recovering from their fear, said to one another: "There's a man who has no fear!"

It is only a few years ago that a young Irish priest, then in the first year of his mission in this country, received what, to him, was literally the death-summons. He was lying ill in bed when the "sick-call" reached his house, the pastor of the district being absent. The poor young priest did not hesitate a moment: no matter what the consequence to himself might be, the Catholic should not be without the consolations of religion. To the dismay of those who knew of his intention, and who remonstrated in vain against what to them appeared to be an act of madness, he started on his journey, a distance of thirty-six miles, which he accomplished on foot, in the midst of incessant rain. Ah! who can tell how often he paused involuntarily on that terrible march, or how he reeled and staggered as he approached its termination? Scarcely had he reached the sick man's bed, and performed the functions of the ministry, when he was conscious of his own approaching death; and there being no brother priest to minister to him in his last hour, he administered the viaticum to himself, and instantly sank on the floor a corpse.

How often does not the priest risk his health, his honor, his life, and even his immortal soul, in order to help a poor dying sinner! How often is not the priest found on the battle-field, whilst the bullets are whistling, and the shells are shrieking, around him! How often is he not found on his knees beside the dying soldier, hearing his last confession, and whispering into his ear the sweet words of pardon and peace! How often must not the priest visit the plague-stricken in the hospitals and in the wretched hovels of the poor! How often must he not remain, even for hours, in a close room, beside those infected with the most loathsome diseases! When all else, when friends and relatives, when the nearest and dearest have abandoned the poor dying wretch, then it is that only the priest of God can be found to assist him in his last and fearful struggle.

Whilst St. Charles Borromeo was Bishop of Milan, there broke out a fierce plague in that city. The priests of the city generously offered their services. They entered the houses of the plague-stricken, they heard their confessions, and administered to them the last sacraments. Neither the loathsome disease, nor the fear of certain death, could appall them, and they all soon fell victims to their zeal.

Death swept them away, but their places were filled by other generous priests, who hastened from the neighboring towns, and, in a short time, one thousand eight hundred priests fell victims to their charity.

And not in Italy alone, in every clime beneath the sun, the Catholic priest has proved the earnestness of his charity, by the generous sacrifice of his life. I need only remind you of the sufferings and heroism of the Catholic priests of Ireland during the long and bloody persecutions that have afflicted that ill-fated country. Their sad yet glorious history is, no doubt, familiar to all. The Catholic priests of Ireland were outlawed; they were commanded to quit the country; they were hunted down like wolves. But, for all that, they did not abandon their poor suffering children; they laid aside their rich vestments, they laid aside their priestly dress, and disguised themselves in the poorest and most humble attire. Their churches were burned down and desecrated; but then the cabins of their persecuted countrymen were opened to them. And the Catholic priest shared in the poverty and the sorrows of his poor children. He followed them into the forest; he descended with them into the caves. Often in some lonely hut, in the midst of a dreary bog, or amid the wild fastnesses of the rugged mountains, the priest could be found kneeling at the bedside of a poor dying father or mother, whilst pale and starving children were weeping around. There you could find the Catholic priest hearing the last confession of that poor soul, aiding her in her death-struggle, and reciting the touching prayers of the Church by the dim flickering of a poor rushlight. The Catholic priest did not abandon his poor, persecuted flock, even though he knew that a price was set on his head, though he knew that spies and informers were in search of him, though he knew that well-trained bloodhounds were sent out to track him. The Catholic priest did not forsake his children, though he knew that, if he were taken, the rack and the gibbet awaited him. He suffered, not only poverty and sorrows with his poor flock, but he often underwent the most cruel death ; for, whenever a priest was found in the country, the tender mercy of the tyrant had decreed that he was to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Would to God I could take you to the Martyr's Room in Paris, where priests, loving their God and their neighbors, are incessantly preparing themselves to go to preach the gospel, to suffer and die for the faith, among the pagans! Would to God you could see there that sacred army, filled with generous soldiers of Jesus Christ, who aspire to the pacific conquest of infidel realms; who burn with the hopes of shedding their blood on the battle-fields of faith, sacrifice, and martyrdom; who very often attain, after a life of labors, toils, and torments, the ensanguined crown which has been the goal of their life-long aspirations!

When they have attained it, when their head has fallen under a pagan's sword, their vestments, their hallowed bones, the instruments of their martyrdom, are reverently gathered by the Christians of the lands where they have been martyred, and sent to Paris; and the hall where all these precious relics are gathered is called the Martyr's Room. The sight alone of this sanctuary, fresh with the blood of those lovers of Jesus Christ, is the most eloquent of sermons on the priest's charity toward the people. Bones, and skeletons, and skulls of martyred priests, enclosed in glass cases; instruments of martyrdom; paintings representing insufferable torments; iron chains which tortured the limbs of the confessors of faith; ropes which strangled them; crucifixes crimsoned with the blood of those who impressed on them their last kiss of love; garments, ensanguined linen,—oh, what a sight! Great God, what a lesson!

Here a huge cangue, which rested for six long months on the shoulders of Bishop Borie; there a mat clogged with the blood of John Baptist Cornay, who upon it was beheaded and quartered, like the animal that is butchered. Near by, a painting describing the horrible torment of the blessed Marchant, whom the executioners chopped all alive, from head to foot, until he died of suffering and exhaustion. Everywhere, in every corner, the image of the good priest dying for the love of God and of his brethren, and of the fiend in human shape crucifying, with an indefatigable hatred, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the person of his priests.

If you wish to know what the Catholic priest has done, go ask the winds, that have heard his sighs and his prayers; ask the earth, that has drunk in his tears and his blood; go ask the ocean, that has witnessed his death-struggle, whilst speeding on an errand of mercy! Go to the dreary shores of the icy North, go to the burning sands of the distant South, and the bleached and scattered bones of the Catholic priest will tell you how earnestly he has labored for the welfare of his fellow-men.

If the many happy souls that have died in the arms, died with the blessing, of the priest, could appear before you at this moment, they would describe to you, in glowing language, the great benefits they have derived from the Catholic priest. They would say to you: "We were weak and helpless, but the consoling words of the priest gave us strength. We trembled at the thought of God's judgments; but the blessing and absolution of the priest gave us a supernatural courage. We were tormented by the assaults of the devil; but the power of the priest put the Evil One to flight. We were heart-broken at the thought of bidding a long farewell to wife and children, to the nearest and dearest; but the priest turned our weeping eyes toward a happier home, where there is no parting, no weeping, no mourning, any more! And even when our soul had left the body, when our friends were shedding fruitless tears over the cold corpse, even *then* the priest of God still followed us with his prayers; he commended us to the mercy of God; he called upon the angels and saints to come to our aid, to present us before the throne of God. Ah! now we understand, indeed, that whosesoever sins the priest forgives on earth, they are truly forgiven them in heaven."

The priest has enemies. He knows it, but he does not complain. The world, too, hated and persecuted his divine Master. But the priest opens his lips, only to pray for them; he raises his hand, only to bless them. He remembers the words of Jesus: "I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, bless those that curse you, and pray for those that persecute and calumniate you;" and, like his divine Master, the priest says: "Father, forgive them."

During the French Revolution, a wicked monster, who had often dyed his hands in the blood of priests, fell dangerously ill. He had sworn that no priest should ever set his foot in his house, and that, if any dared to enter, he should never leave it alive. A priest heard of his illness; he heard, too, of the impious vow he had made. But he heeded it not. The good shepherd must be ready to lay down his life for his sheep. As soon as the wicked monster saw the priest standing before him, he flew into a rage: "What!" cried he, "a priest in my house! Bring me my pistols." Then the dying ruffian raised his brawny arm and shook it threateningly at the priest. "See!" he cried with a horrible oath, "this arm has murdered twelve of such as you!"

"Not so, my good friend," answered the priest, calmly, "you murdered only eleven. The twelfth now stands before you." Then baring his breast, he said: "See here, on my breast, the marks of your fury! See here the scars that your hand has made! God has preserved my life, that I might save your soul." With these words the priest threw his arms around the neck of the dying murderer, and, with tears in his eyes, conjured him, by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, to have pity on his poor soul, and make his peace with God.

Such is the Catholic priest. I tell the truth when I say that he is indeed an angel of God, with the heart of a man: and this angel of the Lord is found in the Roman Catholic Church alone.

8. Have the people any other duty toward the priests to perform?

Yes, the people are also bound to provide for the pastor, and to pay all the necessary expenses of their church and service.

Holy Scripture tells us that, when the holy man Tobias considered the great benefits which God had bestowed upon his family through the angel Raphael, he was seized with fear; he was at a loss how to express his gratitude:

he and his family fell prostrate upon their faces for three hours, thanking and blessing the Lord. He called his son Tobias, and said to him: "What can we give to this holy man that is come with thee?" And the young Tobias said to his father: "Father, what wages shall we give him, or what can be worthy of his benefits? He conducted me, and brought me safe again; he received the money of Gabelus, he caused me to have my wife, and he chased from her the evil spirit; he gave joy to her parents; myself he delivered from being devoured by the fish; thee also he hath made to see the light of heaven, and we are filled with all good things through him. What can we give him sufficient for these things? But I beseech thee, my father, to desire him that he would vouchsafe to accept of half of all the things that have been brought." (Tobias, chap. xii.) It is thus that this holy family showed themselves thankful to God and his holy angel for the divine blessings.

Now you have seen that the priest is, for you, the true angel of God; you have seen that his dignity is far more sublime than that of the angel Raphael; you have seen that the priest's powers far surpass those of all the angels of heaven; that his offices are of greater importance to you than those of the angels; that the benefits which God bestows upon you, through the hands of the priest, far surpass those which he bestows through his holy angels. You have seen that the Catholic priest lives not for himself, but exclusively for you; that he is invested with the most extraordinary powers, not for his benefit, but for yours; in a word, you have seen that God has given you, in the priest, all the goods and blessings of heaven and earth. What fitting thanks can you, then, offer to the

Almighty? Ah! if the Lord had only once shown you but one single mark of affection, even then you would be under infinite obligations to him, and he would deserve an infinite thanksgiving from you, inasmuch as that affection is the gift and favor of an infinite God. But since you daily receive, through the priest, blessings of God, infinite in number and greatness, what should then be your thanksgiving to God and his angel—the priest? With Tobias you should say: "What shall we give to this holy man? What can be worthy of his benefits?" Were you, in imitation of Tobias, to offer to God and his priest one-half of all your goods, it would be a poor return for the divine blessings. Believe me, you will never be able, in this world, fully to understand what God has given to you in the priest, and what you should be to the priest: you will understand it only in the world to come. But let me beseech you to believe, at least, what you cannot understand. And if you live up to this belief, you will listen to our Lord when he speaks of the priest and says: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." (Matt. x, 41.) Our divine Saviour spoke these words to his apostles, and to all his priests in general, to encourage them in establishing on earth his kingdom—the Catholic Church. You know very well that, in order to establish, and keep established, the holy Church, the priests have to announce the gospel truths, they have to administer the sacraments. But this is not enough: they have also to build churches, or keep the old ones, and everything that belongs to them, in good condition and repair; they have to erect and to support Catholic schools, hospitals, and orphan asylums. They are the ministers of God, and, as such, they are charged with the honor of his worship, and the care of his sacred temples. They are, moreover, the almoners of the poor, and the fathers of the needy. How, think you, can poor priests meet all the expenses that they must necessarily incur in the exercise of the sacred ministry? Only put yourselves a day or two in the place of your priests; take care of all the poor of the place; assist all the needy that come to your door, or that modestly hide their poverty from every one but the priest of God. Try to support Catholic schools, colleges, hospitals, orphan asylums. Build new churches, or keep old ones in good condition. Do all this, and more, and you will find out what the difficulties and crosses, the troubles and hardships, of the priests are in this country. You will find that it requires heroic virtue, angelic patience, and superhuman courage in the priests to comply with their duties toward God and men.

Jesus Christ knew full well all the difficulties which his poor priests had to encounter. But he encourages them, and says to them: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet" (a priest), "shall receive the reward of a prophet" (of a priest). Jesus Christ made the salvation of the people dependent on the priest; and he made, also, the priest dependent on the people for his support, and other expenses which he has to incur in the exercise of the sacred ministry. It is by this mutual dependence that our divine Saviour keeps the priests united with the people. The devil—the cursed spirit of discord—has often tried to break up this sacred union between Catholic nations and their clergy. He has succeeded in many countries by means of Protestant governments, but he never could succeed in one country—in the country of the glorious St. Patrick, in Ireland. There the government of England offered, some years ago, to support the Catholic clergy. Had this offer been accepted, the Catholic priests of Ireland would have become dependent on the English government; and that close union and warm love, that deep-rooted respect and esteem which, for so many centuries, has existed between the Irish Catholics and their priests, would soon have fallen a prey to the devilish trick of the government. But, thanks be to God, and to the foresight and wisdom of the Irish clergy, the devil and his colleague—the English government—met, in this instance, as in many others, with a cold reception—with a flat refusal.

Jesus Christ has given to his priests ever so many reasons to keep up mutual love between themselves and the people. Priests, no doubt, will do all in their power to establish and to preserve this love. But Jesus Christ wishes, also, that the people should preserve this mutual love between themselves and the clergy. To obtain this object, they are commanded to support and assist the clergy; but, in order to make them observe this commandment joyfully, Jesus Christ holds out to the people a most powerful inducement. He says to every Catholic: "If you receive my priest, you receive me; and, by receiving me, you receive my heavenly Father." In other words, Jesus Christ says that, by supporting and assisting the priests, you support and assist your divine Saviour himself, who looks upon all the difficulties of his priests as his own, because they are his representatives on earth.

Moreover, in order to make Catholics cling to their priests, and keep them closely united with them, Jesus Christ promises them an immense reward. He says: "He that receiveth a prophet" (a priest), "shall receive the reward of a prophet." Our divine Saviour has attached great blessings to the charity which is shown to the *least* of his brethren on earth: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, my *least* brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. xxv, 40.) By saying, "to the least of these, my brethren," Jesus Christ gives us to understand that there is another class of his brethren who are great in his sight, and whom he loves most tenderly. Now, if God bestows such great blessings upon those who are charitable to the least of the brethren of Jesus Christ, how much more abundantly will he not bestow his blessings upon those who are charitable to his great friends? The Holy Ghost calls our particular attention to this great truth when he says, in Holy Scripture: "If thou do good, know to whom thou dost it, and there shall be much thanks for thy good deeds. Do good to the just, and thou shalt find great recompense: and, if not of him, assuredly of the Lord." (Ecclus. xii, 1, 2.) To the just, especially to those who are eminently just, may be applied what the angel of the Lord said of John the Baptist, namely, that "he was great before God." (Luke i, 15.) The reason of this is, because Jesus Christ lives in the just by his grace: "I live, now not I," says St. Paul, "but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii, 20.) Hence, whatever is given to a just man is given to Christ himself in a more special manner. To show this in reality, Christ has often appeared in the form and clothing of a poor man, and as such begged and received alms. This happened to John the Deacon, as is related in his life by St. Gregory. The same saint relates also (Hom. 39, in Evang.), that Jesus Christ, in the form of a leper, appeared to a certain charitable monk named

Martyrius, who carried him on his shoulders. The same happened to St. Chrisopher, and also to St. Martin, Bishop of Tours. When St. Martin was still a soldier, and receiving instruction for admission into the Catholic Church, he gave one-half of his mantle to a poor man: the following night Jesus Christ appeared to him, wearing this mantle, and said to the angels who surrounded him: "Behold, this is Martin, who gave me his mantle!"

Once St. Catharine of Sienna gave to a poor beggar the silver cross she wore, having nothing else about her to give. During the night Christ appeared to her, and said that, on the day of judgment, he would show that cross to the whole world, in proof of her charity. God, then, rewards liberally those who are charitable to the least of his brethren; but he rewards far more liberally all those who are charitable to his friends—to the just: "He that receiveth a just man," says Jesus Christ, "in the name of a just man" (that is, because he is a just man, a friend of God), "shall receive the reward of a just man."

But what will be the reward of all those who liberally and joyfully support and aid the priests—the ministers and true representatives of God—through whose ministry men are made just and holy? To understand this, I must make here a very important remark, to which I call your special attention, namely, that there are degrees in this well-doing. The more just a man is, both for himself and others; the more souls he leads to justice, to holiness of life, the greater will be his reward, and consequently the greater, also, will be the reward of him who assists such a just man: "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii, 3.) To whom can these words of Holy Scripture be applied more truly than to fervent pastors of souls and missionary priests? They devote their whole life to the salvation of souls. Now, there is nothing more pleasing in the sight of God than laboring for the salvation of souls: "We cannot offer any sacrifice to God," says St. Gregory, "which is equal to that of the zeal for the salvation of souls." "This zeal and labor for the salvation of men," says St. John Chrysostom, "are of so great a merit before God, that to give up all our goods to the poor, or to spend our whole life in the exercise of all sorts of austerities, cannot equal the merit of this labor. This merit of laboring in the vineyard of the Lord is something far greater than the working of miracles. To be employed in this blessed labor is even more pleasing to the Divine Majesty than to suffer martydom." If, then, in the opinion of the fathers of the Church and of all the saints, there can be no greater honor and no greater merit than that of working for the salvation of souls, we must also say that there can be no work of corporal mercy more honorable and more meritorious than that of giving charitable aid to the pastors of souls, to missionary priests, and to persons consecrated to God. To such as give this aid may be applied the words of the prophet: "They shall shine as stars for all eternity." "The charity which you bestow," says Aristotle (lib. i, Ethic., c. 3), "will be so much the more divine, the more it tends to the common welfare." But what kind of charity is tending more to the common welfare than that which is bestowed upon such apostolic laborers as spend their life exclusively in laboring for the salvation of souls? Now, this charity is divine in a most eminent degree, and consequently it makes all those divine who bestow it. They shall, without doubt, shine as the stars, nay, even as the sun, throughout all eternity: "Then the just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii, 43); and this glory and happiness of theirs in heaven will be in proportion to the zeal and fervor with which they have continued to furnish charitable aid to Jesus Christ, in the persons of the ministers of the holy Catholic Church: "He that receiveth a prophet, shall have the reward of a prophet." He who receives a prophet, says our Lord, that is, he who gives charitable aid to a priest, will receive the reward of a priest. The reason of this is, because, by his charitable aid, he contributes toward the spreading of the gospel; and, therefore, as he thus shares in the labor and in the merits of the gospel, he must also share in the reward promised to the true minister of God. Should you aid a man performing sinful actions, you would become accessory to his sins. So, in like manner, by assisting the priests of God in performing good works for the salvation and sanctification of souls, you share in all their good works—in their merits and in their rewards. "A willow-tree," says St. Gregory, "bears no fruit, but supporting, as it does, the vine together with its grapes, it makes these its own, by sustaining what is not its own." (Hom. 20, in Evang.) In like manner, he who supports the priest makes his own all those good works which are performed by the priest; that is to say, he preaches through the priest, he hears confessions through him, he converts sinners through him, he consoles the sick through him, he encourages the desperate through him, he confirms the just in their good resolutions through him; in a word, he sanctifies the world through the priest, and is, through him, the cause that the most precious blood of Jesus Christ is not shed in vain; and he gladdens, through him, the angels and saints in heaven, and especially the sacred hearts of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On this account, St. Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Smyrnians, rightly concludes, from the above sentence of Christ on the last day, that he who honors a prisoner of Christ, will receive the reward of the martyrs; because, by honoring such a prisoner, he encourages him to suffer martyrdom. For this reason, many Christians formerly merited the grace of martyrdom, because they encouraged, fed, served, and buried the martyrs. In like manner, we lawfully infer, from the above-mentioned sentence of Christ, that those who receive and aid the priests of the Church, the pastors of souls, will receive the reward of pastors of souls; on condition, however, that the assistance which they give is offered with a cheerful heart. When God, in his bounty, vouchsafes to call you to coöperate in any of his works, he does not employ soldiers, or tax-gatherers, or constables, to collect the impost—he accepts from you only a voluntary assistance. The Master of the Universe repudiates constraint, for he is the God of free souls: he does not consent to receive anything which is not spontaneous, and offered with a cheerful heart.

To conclude: The Catholic priest is the priest of the Lord of heaven and earth: it is impossible for you to conceive a higher dignity. The Catholic priest is the plenipotentiary of God: it is impossible for you to conceive a greater power. The Catholic priest is the minister of God: it is impossible for you to conceive an office more sublime and more important. The Catholic priest is the representative of God: it is impossible for you to conceive a higher commission. The Catholic priest is the vicegerent of God: it is impossible for you to conceive a higher merit. The Catholic priest is the treasurer of God: it is impossible for you to conceive a greater benefactor of mankind, a man worthier of your love and veneration, of your charity and liberality.

May you, therefore, always receive the priest as the Galatians received St. Paul the Apostle: "You despised me not," writes this great apostle to the Galatians, "you did not reject me, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ. I bear you witness that, if it could be done, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and would have given them to me." (Chap. iv, 14, 15.)

MATRIMONY

1. What is the sacrament of matrimony?

Matrimony is a sacrament which sanctifies the lawful union of husband and wife, and gives them the graces necessary to fulfil the duties of their state.

Long ago Almighty God uttered a remarkable prophecy: "I shall espouse thee forever," said the Lord; "I shall espouse thee in justice; I shall espouse thee in mercy; I shall espouse thee in faith." This prophecy was not *then* understood. But when the Son of God came upon earth to establish a new race of men, then it was that this prophecy was not only understood, but fulfilled; and its fulfilment continues, and will continue to the end of time.

The Son of God came to espouse in one person his divine nature with our human nature. This espousal or union of two natures, the divine and the human, in the one person of the Son of God, was brought about by a mutual consent of the two natures. As the Son of God wished to take human nature from the Blessed Virgin Mary, he asked for her consent through the Archangel Gabriel. The human nature, in the person of the Blessed Virgin, consented to the espousal with the divine nature, by answering: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Be it done to me according to thy word." This consent being given, the Word, the Son of God, is made flesh. Thenceforward, the Son of God and the Son of Mary were no more two, but one.

But this union of the Word and our human nature is, in a certain sense, incomplete. As it was effected for the purpose of regenerating humanity, Christ needed a bride to assist him in carrying out this purpose. After Almighty God had created Adam, the head of human nature, he completed this creation by the formation of Eve drawn from his bosom; and by this addition the human race was created so as to live and perpetuate itself. In like manner, the Incarnation of Christ, in a certain sense, is finished, carried out in its fulness, by the formation of the Church, which is called in Holy Scripture, "his bride," "his body," "the fulness of his body," and is drawn from his side, opened for us on the cross; and, by the incorporation of the faithful into Jesus Christ in the bosom of the Church, Christianity is complete, it lives, it grows, it gives life to men, and peoples heaven. This incorporation of the faithful into Christ takes place in baptism. It is in this sacrament that the soul is espoused with Jesus Christ. This is the dignity to which men are called. In order to show us the reality of these spiritual espousals, our divine Saviour often appeared in a visible form to holy souls, and espoused them in a sensible manner. One day, during the time of carnival, St. Catharine of Sienna was praying in her cell. Her relatives and neighbors were amusing themselves according to the custom of the season. But she sought her pleasure in God alone. On a sudden our blessed Lord appeared to her and said: "Because thou hast shunned the vanities and the forbidden pleasures of the world, and hast fixed thy heart on me alone, I will now espouse thee in faith and unite thy soul to mine." Then St. Catharine looked up and saw, beside our Saviour, the blessed Mother of God. She also saw there St. John the Evangelist, St. Paul the Apostle, and St. Dominic, the founder of her order. The prophet David, too, was present, and he played on his harp with marvellous sweetness. The Blessed Virgin Mary now took the right hand of St. Catharine, and presented her to our dear Saviour. She besought her divine Son to accept this virgin for his spouse. Jesus smiled graciously upon the saint. He drew forth a golden ring, set with four precious stones, in the centre of which blazed a magnificent diamond. He placed this ring upon the finger of St. Catharine, and said: "I, thy Creator and Redeemer, espouse thee in faith. Be faithful until death, and we shall celebrate our nuptials in heaven." From this visible espousal of our Lord with St. Catharine of Sienna, we can easily understand his invisible espousal with the Church, with the souls of the just.

Now, Christ willed that, in the New Law, the union of man and woman should resemble his union with human nature, with his Church, with the souls of the just. Such was his design.

This design of our Lord will be better understood from the explanation of the answer to the following question:—

2. Who instituted matrimony?

God himself, when he gave Eve to Adam to be his wife; and Christ raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament.

When God made the first pair of human beings, he did not leave them to the instincts of nature, as he had done in the case of lower animals; but for them he especially instituted marriage. The waters, at his command, had brought forth abundantly, shoals of fishes were in the sea. Birds of every description were flying in the air. Animals of all kinds were on the earth. The eagle built its nest on the dizzy height. The beasts of the forest sought their lairs. Cattle and sheep cropped the young herbage. The dove had found her mate. The nightingale tuned her song.

The tiny insects, to which a leaf was a world; the animalculæ to which a drop of water was a universe,—all were fashioned by God and received the command: "Be fruitful, and multiply on the earth."

But the case of man was different. As he was formed with an elaboration not exercised in other departments of creation; as his formation differed from that of the other living creatures; as man was made from the dust of the earth, and animated by the breath of the Eternal; as woman was made from man, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh,—so there was a difference in the manner in which they were directed to fulfil the great purpose of their creation.

Woman was formed as a helpmate for man; for God declared that it was not good for man to be alone. There was not a creature in the teeming earth, the blue expanse, the deep waters, but had found a mate. The first man stood alone in solitary glory, a creature isolated from all other creatures by a higher nature. His great want was that of another being like himself. And the Universal Parent made woman, brought her and the man together, and instituted marriage.

Marriage was peculiarly adapted to the position of the human race. It was necessary that man should have a companion, a friend, a wife; and thus it was ordained that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.

The wife was given to be *with* the husband, not given *to* him. Thus we read that Adam said: "The woman that thou gavest to be *with* me." She was not to be his slave, nor the victim of caprice and violence, nor the toy of an hour, but a partner in all that concerned him—the sharer of his joy and sorrow, of his prosperity and his tribulation.

As the vine, which has long trained its graceful foliage about the oak, and been lifted up by it into sunshine, will, when the hardy plant is rifted by the thunderbolt, cling round it with its caressing tendrils, and bind up its shattered boughs; so is it beautifully ordered by Providence that woman, who is the mere dependent and ornament of man in his happier hours, should be his stay and solace when smitten with sudden calamity—winding herself into the rugged recesses of his nature, tenderly supporting the drooping head, and binding up the broken heart.

The woman is the complement of the man. The man alone is not sufficient for himself; nor is the woman sufficient of herself. God distributed the habits of the intellect, of the affections and of the body, between the two sexes, so that what is wanting in the one is compensated for in the other; and it is only by union that a perfect equilibrium and whole is formed. The man is able to conceive vast ideas, and to treat the external relations of the family; he is incapable of descending to the minute details of domestic affairs. The woman can manage domestic affairs and rule the house, but has little capacity to conceive great undertakings. The man is inclined to sternness and violence; the woman is mild, and gentle, and amiable, and a centre of attraction at the family hearth. The man is robust and loves risk; the woman is timid and calculating. It is only in the union of these two temperaments that excesses compensate for the defects, and a harmonious and perfect whole is formed. Thus woman is truly a helpmate for man.

But God gave Eve to Adam, not only to be a helpmate for him, but also to be his wife. He wished that, through them, the human race should be perpetuated and live to the end of the world: "He created them male and female; and he blessed them and said: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth." (Gen. i, 27.) These two are spoken of as the ends of marriage before the fall of man. But after the fall, when now the flesh was no longer obedient to the spirit, there was a third end of marriage: it was to be a means by which men might more easily avoid offending God by sins of impurity. And so St. Paul, in speaking of those who do not possess the gift of continence, says: "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." (1 Cor. vii, 2.)

Marriage as such is a contract, which is defined, "the lawful union of a man and a woman, by which they give themselves up, one to the other, for mutual society and the propagation of the human race." As men bind themselves to one another by contracts of different sorts, and with different objects in view, so the essential part of marriage, as a contract, is the man and the woman binding themselves to each other. But, in order to do this validly, it is necessary that the contract should be between persons not lawfully hindered from making it—that it should be voluntary, or else it is not really the parties binding themselves; and that the contract be expressed by words or outward signs: and this, to signify, not that the contracting parties intend or promise to bind themselves hereafter to each other, but that they actually do so then and there, and with the intention of living as man and wife.

Now, this contract of marriage may be made outside of civilized society and its provisions; the man and the woman accepting each other for life according to the law of nature. Such a contract is called a *natural* marriage. But, if the contract of marriage is made in civil society, and the parties are united according to the civil laws of the country, but without any religious rite or ceremony, the marriage is called a civil marriage. Such are the marriages performed in the offices of the government.

There is also the religious marriage. This is either Catholic, or it is not Catholic. In this country, a religious marriage, which is not Catholic, is sometimes celebrated in some place of heretical worship, and before a heretical minister; and as it is accepted by the law of the State, it includes both the natural and the civil marriage. But however valid, if celebrated between two persons who are baptized, it is unlawful, even to the extent of mortal sin; and that, for the grave reasons which will be given a little further on. The Catholic marriage is a marriage in the Catholic Church of Christ. It differs widely from the natural and the civil marriage.

The Council of Trent defined marriage to be a sacrament. This sacrament is called matrimony from two Latin words, *matris munus*, which signify the office of a mother, because the woman who contracts matrimony undertakes the office and duty of a mother. Now, "if any one affirms," says the Church, "that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the Evangelic Law, instituted by Christ, our Lord . . . and that it does not confer grace,—let him be anathema." (Sess. xxiv, de Matrim., Can. 1.) Marriage as a sacrament was instituted by our Lord when he was on earth. But as a contract, or state of life, it dates, as we have seen, from the beginning of the world—being ordained by God himself when he united our first parents, and pronounced upon them his divine blessing. Although, in course of time, the original law of marriage became corrupted, although, even under the law of Moses, God tolerated many things on account of human weakness, yet our blessed Lord, in clear and express teaching, brought back the law of marriage to its original purity. He raised the natural contract of marriage to the character of a supernatural marriage, by making it a sacrament.

What is required to constitute a sacrament? Matter, form, grace, and the institution by Christ. In baptism, for instance, the water is the matter, and the words, "I baptize thee," etc., are the form. In extreme unction, the oil is the matter, and the words spoken by the priest are the form. So, in the sacrament of marriage, the bodies of the contracting parties are the matter. The form consists in the words by which the bridegroom gives himself to his bride and establishes her right over him, and the bride gives herself to the bridegroom and establishes his right over her.

In the other sacraments, the elements are mere inanimate creatures, such as bread and wine, water, oil, etc. But, in this sacrament, the elements are more noble and far more excellent—they are living, reasonable, immortal beings; the body being the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the soul the living image of the living God. Those things, then, which are the essence of the natural and civil contract, are the very constituents of the sacrament of marriage. But when the apostle St. Paul calls marriage a sacrament, nay, a great sacrament, he adds the condition, that it is so "in Christ and in the Church." He means to say: The conjugal union between man and wife, of which God is the author, is a sacrament, that is, a sacred sign of the holy union that subsists between Christ and his Church. That this is the true meaning of his words, is shown by the fathers of the Church who have interpreted the passage; and the Council of Trent has given to it the same interpretation. The husband, therefore, is evidently compared, by the apostle, to Christ; the wife, to the Church.

It is, then, only in Christ and in his Church that marriage is raised into a sign and an effective instrument of grace, which, according to the Council of Trent, not only unites two hearts and souls, as it were, into one, but raises also their love to heaven, and sanctifies it and renders it the living expression of, and a participation in, the love with which the only-begotten Son of God loves his spouse, the Catholic Church. So that the Catholic parties are united, not merely in the order of nature, but in Christ, in union of faith and of a love whose final end is God, and of which the love of God is the ruling principle,—a love which strengthens the inner powers of the soul to the performance of virtuous and meritorious acts, and helps the married pair through the duties, difficulties, and responsibilities of married life. The end of Catholic marriage is, not only the propagation of the human race, but also the multiplying of the sons of God in the Church. The man and wife are not only partners in a human contract, but also the dispensers of a divine mystery, of a great sacrament. It is a burden—not as a pagan marriage is a burden, but as the wings of a bird, which, no doubt, have their weight, but yet serve to raise the body heavenward. Divine goodness never imposes a burden without giving the grace which makes it light.

To take care of the bodily and spiritual life of children is, no doubt, a heavy, a very heavy, burden indeed; and mothers cannot carry this burden without a tender love for their children,—a love ennobled and supernaturalized by God's grace. Now, it is true that God has made the love of mothers for their children a necessary love. It is for this reason that there is no command in the divine law for parents to love their children, whilst, on the contrary, children are commanded to love their parents. Love toward one's own offspring is a love so deeply planted in the heart by nature herself, that the wild beasts never fail to love their young. It is said that even tigers, hearing the cry of their whelps when they are taken by the hunters, will plunge into the sea to swim after the vessels where they are confined.

But this natural love of a mother for her offspring, in order to be persevering and untiring under all circumstances, must be strengthened and supported by supernatural love or grace; otherwise, it will decrease and be lost in the end, and, with the loss of this love, the Christian woman loses her divine calling. As there are thousands of married women who never received the grace of the sacrament of matrimony, it is no wonder to see thousands of them who have lost their divine calling—to hear of a countless number of unnatural crimes, committed under the veil of marriage, that are becoming so common at the present day. If they have been sharers in the blessing which God bestowed upon our first parents, they either destroy it as soon as they perceive it, or try to prevent it by the most unhallowed, most revolting and most barbarous means.

The grandmother of St. Ludger was a heathen. As soon as his mother was born, the grandmother ordered the babe to be put to death. Among the heathens of Friesland, the parents and grandparents had the power to murder a babe that had not yet tasted food. Enraged because her daughter-in-law had given birth only to girls, the cruel grandmother had given orders that, if the next child were a girl, it should be suffocated at once in a pail of water. The order was obeyed. The servant took the newly-born babe by the feet, and held its head over the pail. The babe, however, resisted, seized the sides of the pail with its tiny hands, and strove to save its life. A neighboring woman came in, was touched with compassion at the piteous sight, snatched the babe from the servant, took it home, and gave it some honey. As it had now tasted food, the heathen grandmother had no longer a right to kill it. The child's life was spared; it grew up, and afterward became the mother of two holy bishops: St. Ludger and St. Hildegrim. Her daughter became also the mother of several renowned bishops.

Such unnatural crimes occur most frequently among those women whose love for their offspring has never been ennobled and supernaturalized by the grace of the sacrament of matrimony. Were the devil to tempt a Catholic mother to commit such an unnatural crime, she would be prompt to repel his hellish suggestion and to say:

> "Thy child's a gift which God himself hath given:
> Stain not thy soul with crime that cries to heaven.
> Far better see around thy board a score,
> Than bar one soul from heav'n for evermore."

Indeed, the love of a good Catholic mother is proverbial. There is no love so pure and so thoroughly disinterested as her love for her child. Her love knows no change; brothers and sisters have forgotten one another; fathers have proved unforgiving to their children; husbands have been false to their wives, and wives to their husbands, and children too often forget their parents; but you rarely hear of a good Catholic mother forgetting even her ungrateful, disobedient children, whose actions have lacerated her heart, and caused dark shadows to glide before her eyes and enter her very soul. Still, there are moments when her faithful heart yearns toward them; there are moments when the reminiscences of the happy *past* obliterate the *present* sorrow, and the poor wounded spirit is cheered for a while, because there is still one of the fibres of the root of hope left in her forlorn breast, and a languid smile will flit over her wan and prematurely faded face. Yes, she forgives, though for her there is no river Lethe from which she may drink in this life. This forgiveness shows that her love is the most pure in this world, and the nearest approach to the love that God has so graciously bestowed upon her.

Some years ago a vessel sailed from the coast of Ireland. It was filled with passengers, who were coming to this country to better their future. The vessel set sail with a favorable wind. The sky was clear, and the sun shone gayly upon the sparkling sea. But suddenly the heavens grew dark. A fierce storm arose. The winds howled madly around the vessel. The ship was hurried on—on, till it was dashed against the rocks. The wild, surging waves dashed over it. The vessel split in twain. A part of it remained hanging amid the rocks, and the rest sank, with those on board, beneath the waves, far down into the depth of the sea. The storm continued to rage for several days. At last, when the wind had died away, some hardy fishermen, who lived on the coast, took a skiff and rowed out to the wreck. They entered the part of the vessel that remained hanging amid the rocks. They broke open the cabin door. They heard distinctly the feeble wail of a child. They rushed in. They found a babe lying upon the breast of its dead mother. The child was eagerly sucking the blood which oozed from a large wound in its mother's breast. The mother had died of cold and hunger; but, even amid her fearful sufferings, she did not forget her child. She took a sharp knife, and, with the wonderful love of a mother's heart, she made a deep gash in her breast, in order that her child might preserve its life by drinking her own heart's-blood! Ah! who can measure the depth of the wonderful love of a mother's heart?

Now, let it be remembered that the disinterestedness, perseverance, and endurance of this love is owing to the grace of the sacrament of matrimony. The raising of matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, therefore, may be compared in its effects to the cultivating of a fruit-tree, which brings forth the same fruit as in its wild state, but which is sweet and savory, and not sour and unpalatable. So matrimony, as a sacrament, has the same ends and duties as it had before; but the grace attached to it enables the parties to love each other and their offspring with a more pure, a more faithful, and a more enduring affection, so as to be able to fulfil the vows which they made before the altar to cherish each other in sickness and health, in poverty as well as in riches. It is this supernatural character of marriage which shows us how the union of Christ with human nature, with his Church and with the souls of the just, is the model of the union of the Catholic husband and wife.

In Christ, two natures, the divine and human, are joined together, in the one person of the Son of God. In the Catholic marriage, two persons, man and wife, are joined together, as it were, in one person—having, so to speak, but one soul and one will by means of sacramental grace. The union of the Son of God with human nature was effected by mutual consent. In the Catholic marriage, the intimate union is also effected by the mutual consent of the parties, and the Lord interposes to give it force by sacramental grace.

Christ acknowledges but one spouse, the Church; and the ties which attach him to her, to his well-beloved, cannot be broken: "What God has once assumed," says an axiom of theology, "he has never abandoned." "To the consummation of ages he continues united to his Church, and all the combined powers of hell will never be able to separate him from her." (Matt. xvi, 18.) In like manner, in the Catholic marriage, husband and wife are to live together in an intimate and constant society. They owe to each other an inviolable fidelity, and this union will not be possible between more than two persons: so that the husband shall never have more than one wife, and the wife shall have but one husband. If death destroys this union, the survivor can, it is true, contract a new union; at the same time, however, this second marriage, as it represents less perfectly the union of the Saviour with only one Church, will be a kind of stain and irregularity. But, during the lifetime of the two married persons, nothing will be able to destroy the bond which unites them. It will be perpetual and indissoluble, like that of the Son of God with our human nature, which makes one Christ forever.

The principle of Christ's union with the Church is grace, and the supernatural principle of marriage in Christ and in the Church is also grace.

Again, the principle of Christ's union with his Church is charity. He loved the Church and gave himself for her, and the end of all his love is the final union of the Church with him in the Father, in the kingdom of heaven. And the supreme principle of the marriage union between two devout Catholics is charity, which purifies natural love from its imperfections, and raises it to a love in Christ, according to his unblemished law, that looks to final union in the kingdom of God.

Again, Christ is the head of the Church, which obeys him and is subject to him as to her Lord and Master. And in like manner, the husband is the head of the wife, who is subject to him by obedience, and that, not only on account of the law of nature, but also for Christ's sake. And as Christ is the Saviour of his mystical body, the Church, and nourishes and cherishes her; so is the husband bound to nourish and cherish his wife, who is to him as his own body, and who, like himself, is a member of Christ, and is therefore to be treated with respect.

Again, as the union of Christ with his Church is fruitful in bringing forth new children to God, so the union of the Catholic husband and wife is fruitful, not only in bringing forth children to the world, but in leading them by faith to Christ and to his Church. Thus the sublime end of their marriage is to add members to the Church of Christ, and to increase the number of the elect in the kingdom of God.

There is, indeed, nothing more pure, more sublime, more holy, than the Catholic doctrine of matrimony. It is full of wonders, which charm, while they astonish us: it sanctifies the married people if they live up to it.

During the Crusades, a young English nobleman, named Gilbert, set out for the Holy Land with his servant Richard, to fight against the Saracens. During one of the engagements, they were both taken prisoners, loaded with chains, and cast into a dungeon. There they remained for about a year and a half.

After some time, however, Gilbert's master, who was a Saracen prince, noticing the great wisdom and virtue of his English slave, treated him with kindness and respect. This prince had a daughter, who was charmed by the virtuous bearing of Gilbert. Finding him one day alone, she inquired of him whence he came, and what was his religion. "I am," answered he, "an Englishman and a Catholic." "What does your religion, then, teach?" she asked. Gilbert then briefly explained to her the principal mysteries of our holy faith. He dwelt especially on the great mystery of the birth, the sufferings, and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. From this time the young princess often spoke to him on the subject of his religion. One day she said to him: "You speak so much of Jesus Christ! You seem to love him from your heart! Would you, then, be willing to lay down your life for love of Jesus Christ?"

Gilbert instantly thought that she had been sent by the prince her father to induce him to renounce his faith: "Yes," cried he with his noble ardor, "I love Jesus Christ so much that I would willingly lay down my life for his sake. I would consider it the greatest happiness I could have in this world to shed my heart's-blood for my Redeemer."

The princess was so touched by this generous answer, that she resolved from that moment to become a Christian, even though she were forced to forsake home and fortune for the sake of the religion of Jesus Christ. Some time after this, Gilbert and his servant, finding a favorable opportunity, broke their chains and escaped. As soon as the princess found that Gilbert was gone, she became inconsolable. She had no one to teach her the divine religion of Jesus Christ.

In the midst of her grief, she remembered that Gilbert had told her he came from the city of London in England. She resolved then, cost what it might, to fly from her father's house, to make her way to London, and there to become a Christian. Accordingly, she fled alone, one night, from her father's house, and after passing, as if by miracle, through a thousand dangers and difficulties, she at last reached a seaport town, where she found a ship ready to sail for England. She went on board, and arrived safely at London.

As soon as she landed, she found herself in the greatest straits. A stranger in a strange land, without home or friends, finding no one even to understand her language! She recommended herself earnestly to our Lord Jesus Christ, and God did not forsake her. It happened that Richard, the servant of Gilbert, passed near where she was, and instantly recognized her. You may imagine the joy of the princess when she saw Richard, and learned that he was still living with Gilbert. "But how did you arrive here?" asked Richard in astonishment. "I came hither to become a Christian," she answered: "it is my most ardent wish." Richard now hastened home, and informed his master of the arrival of the princess. But Gilbert could not believe that one of so high a rank, so delicately brought up, could undertake alone so long and dangerous a voyage. But Richard insisted, and assured his master that it was a fact. Gilbert admired the wonderful faith of the princess, gave orders to have her conducted to the house of a good lady of his acquaintance, and requested the lady to take as much care of her as if she were her own daughter. Next day Gilbert called upon the Saracen princess. As soon as she saw him she fell on her knees and conjured him, with tears, to instruct her fully in the religion of Jesus Christ, as it was for that she had left her home and kindred. Gilbert was greatly moved by the extraordinary love for the faith of this poor Mahometan.

But he had made a vow to fight against the infidels, and, not knowing what answer to give the princess, he went to consult the bishop. He found the bishop in the company of five other prelates. He related everything to them, and told them, also, of the vow he had made. The prelates, after carefully examining everything, decided that it was clearly the will of God that he should espouse the princess, and as their intentions were so pure and so noble, God would surely bless the marriage. The princess was then carefully instructed, and finally baptized.

When the bishop asked the question, "Wilt thou be baptized?" she answered: "O yes! I desire it with all my heart. It was for this that I left my home and kindred, and exposed myself to so many dangers and hardships." All present were greatly touched at witnessing the fervor of this young neophyte. She received in baptism the name of Matilda. After her baptism she was espoused to Gilbert. The bishop himself gave the nuptial blessing.

Their union was, indeed, a happy one, and evidently blessed by God. But Gilbert could not forget his vow, and still he had not the heart to tear himself away from his loving spouse. One day, noticing that he looked sad, Matilda asked him if he perhaps regretted that he had espoused her. "No! no!" answered Gilbert: "God forbid! But you know I have made a vow to fight against the infidels; yet I have not the heart to tear myself from you." "Ah, my dear spouse," replied the noble woman, "since it is God's will, I do not wish to detain you. When you were a captive in my father's house, you told me that you were willing to die for Jesus Christ. I wish to imitate your loving generosity. Though your life is dearer to me than my own, I am willing to give you to Jesus Christ. You have taught me to know and love him. I feel certain that the good God who watched so kindly over me when yet an infidel, will not forsake me now that I am a Christian." Gilbert parted with a heavy heart from his loving spouse. For three long years and a half he fought against the infidels. At length, having fulfilled his vow, he returned to England. Great was the joy of Matilda when she beheld her beloved spouse once more. God showered abundant blessings upon their union. In fact, Matilda became the mother of a great saint—the holy bishop and martyr, St. Thomas of Canterbury, born 1119. (*Vita Sancti Thomæ.*)

3. Who can receive the sacrament of matrimony?

Only single persons, who are free from every impediment to marriage.

Every baptized person, who is not hindered by any natural impediment, or by any that arises from the law of God or of the Church, is capable of receiving the sacrament of matrimony. Thus, there are four kinds of obstacles to its valid reception.

First, unbaptized persons, though they can enter the contract of marriage, are incapable of receiving the sacrament of matrimony.

Secondly, persons, incapable, from any natural cause, of fulfilling the principal end of marriage, cannot validly contract it.

Thirdly, the law of God forbids persons within certain degrees of kindred to contract marriage, so that they can not do so validly.

Fourthly, the law of the Church also forbids certain persons and declares them incapable of matrimony, as we shall see when explaining the impediments to marriage.

4. What should those bear in mind who intend to enter the married state?

1, *They should ask God to guide them in the choice of their state of life ;* 2, *they should consult their confessor and their parents ;* 3, *they should, in their choice, care more for religion and virtue than for temporal advantages ;* 4, *they should consider well whether they will be able to fulfil the weighty duties of the married state.*

Marriage is a subject in which most persons are interested. To both sexes it is an attractive topic. It engages their thoughts, even before they arrive at an age for entering on married life. Marriage, however, is one of the most serious actions in life. The young maiden must leave father and mother; must bind herself for life; must confide to a stranger—to one whose inmost soul she cannot know; must surrender her future happiness, her freedom, her life, and, often, her eternal welfare. Husband and wife usually go together, either to heaven or to hell.

"Those, then," says St. John Chrysostom, "who have set their hearts on marriage, ought not to venture on a matter so grave without mature deliberation. If you buy a house, you carefully examine its condition, and whether it will suit you. Before you engage your servants, you use every means to know about their health, their good sense, their mental qualities and moral dispositions. If the house proves defective, you can sell it again. If your servants are useless or unmanageable, you can free yourself of them. But you cannot dispose of your wife. She is joined to you for life, and is always with you in the house."

What, then, should those bear in mind who intend to enter the married state?

1. *They should ask God to guide them in the choice of their state of life.*

If a young girl speaks of going to a convent, her parents, her friends, all warn her. Every one asks: "Are you sure it is your vocation? Even if you intend to lead a single life, are you sure that you are called to the convent? If not called to that state of life, you will be unhappy. What, then, will become of you?" And the young girl prays for light. She offers up penances and novenas and fervent communions. She reads good books. She abstains, as far as possible, from gay company and worldly amusements. She will even go a great distance to consult a good, prudent priest. She leaves nothing undone, to be certain of her vocation. And in all this, she does well. It is certainly of the utmost importance to know one's vocation.

But how does that young girl act who intends to get married? How do her parents and friends act? Do they warn her? Do they tell her: "Oh, perhaps the married life is not your vocation, and if not, how will you be happy"? Do they advise her to pray, to wait, to consult a prudent priest? And does the young girl offer up penances and novenas and fervent communions, to find whether marriage be her vocation or not? Have you ever met with one girl who prepared for marriage in this way?

We often hear married people complain of the great misery and unhappy condition of their life. No doubt, one of the chief reasons why the married life of so many persons is unhappy is, because they embraced this state of life without being called thereto by God.

There is an important truth which many at the present day are apt to forget: It is extremely difficult, aye, morally speaking, impossible, for us to be saved, unless we choose that state of life to which God has called us. For, in order to be saved, we must fulfil the obligations of our state of life, and avoid all the dangers which are naturally attached to such a state. The duties of a priest, for instance, are different from those of a layman; the duties of a religious are different from those of a secular; the duties of the married life are different from those of the single life, and so on.

Now, each of these states has its duties, its difficulties, and its dangers. Upon the fulfilment of these duties depends our whole eternity. Now, to fulfil the duties of our state, we need not only the ordinary graces which God gives to all men, but we need, beside, the particular graces belonging to that state; and without these particular graces, it is morally impossible for us to fulfil our obligations.

Now, to whom does God give these particular graces? Only to those who have chosen that state of life for which God created them. As for those who enter a state of life to which they are not called, they cannot expect to receive those particular graces; consequently, they will not be able to fulfil the duties of that state. There is, therefore, every reason to fear that they will be unhappy in this life, and forever miserable in the next.

Pray, then, often, for light to know whether you are called by God to the married state. Say with David: "Lord, show me the way in which thou wouldst have me to walk;" or with St. Paul: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Say a prayer like this every day, especially during that part of Mass which follows consecration. For this intention often receive holy communion, and add other good works. Have recourse to your guardian angel and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to inspire you to serve God in the state of life to which he has called you.

2. *They should consult their confessor and their parents.* To prayer, should be added consultation with a prudent confessor. It is his business to correct mistakes into which persons easily fall about themselves, and to ascertain the impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is the ordinary way of God's providence. He sent Saul to Ananias, in order that he might learn with certainty the nature of his vocation. Parents should also be consulted. Undoubtedly, parents ought to have the greatest possible interest in the vocation of their children. Their care and responsibility as parents extend certainly to this most important and critical period of the life of their children, and the children, as a general rule, ought to confer with their parents upon so serious a matter.

"My son," says Holy Scripture, "do nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done." (Ecclus. xxxii, 24.) The respect and obedience which children owe to their parents by the law of nature and by the law of God, require of them that, in matters which involve the future happiness both of themselves and parents, nothing should be done without consulting them. Hence St. Alphonsus says: "When children wish to marry, they should endeavor to procure the consent of their parents; for, from marriages contracted against the consent of parents, arise a thousand evils—disputes, hatred, and quarrels. On this account it seldom happens that children can be excused from mortal sin if they contract marriage against the will of their father and mother, particularly if they marry without their knowledge." Among the people of God in the Old Law, the parents had the marriage of their children almost exclusively in their own hands; and when Almighty God speaks to his people on the subject, he addresses himself to the parents only: "Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son." (Deut. vii, 3.) And on this account we find that the patriarchs and servants of God, as Isaac and Jacob and Samson, married not without being advised by their parents, and having their full consent and approval.

Parents sometimes object to their sons, and more especially to their daughters, leaving them, because, as they say, they cannot spare them from home. It is perfectly true that, where a child is absolutely necessary to the life or livelihood of a parent, filial piety bars the vocation, at least for the time being. But a mere sentimental imaginary necessity, strong and passionate feelings, and even the great convenience and value of the child's services at home, are not sufficient motives to warrant a parent in refusing consent, when it seems otherwise clear that God is calling the soul to serve him in another state of life. As God has provided abundant graces for every one in the path into which he calls him, it would be the height of cruelty on the part of parents, if, for their own personal gratification or for some imaginary benefit, they were to deprive their children of these graces and of their fruits both in this life and in the next. The parent may experience a brief joy in retaining his child or in constraining his course; but it will be short-lived pleasure, and must end in sorrow and regrets. Catholic doctrine upon this subject is very clear. St. Alphonsus, in his "Moral Theology" (lib. iv, n. 77), teaches that "it must be held, with the common opinion of theologians, that parents are guilty of mortal sin who, by threatening, or frightening, or deceiving their children, or by imploring them and holding out promises to them, seek to induce them to give up their vocation." He says that they are guilty of two sins: the one against charity, for a reason which is obvious; and the other against parental piety, for they are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to educate their children and to attend to their spiritual welfare. They may be excused from grievous sin, at least for a time, from inadvertence, which may often exist where strong natural affections are called into play, or on account of their ignorance of their duty.

If, then, under such circumstances, the parents refuse their consent unreasonably, the child has a right, and often an imperative duty, to follow the vocation of God without the consolation of the parental approval; for, "we must obey God rather than man."

3. *They should, in their choice, care more for religion and virtue than for temporal advantages.*

In our modern marriages the grand object of attention is usually—*money!* Owing to the progress of the gospel in civilized society, the cruel traffic in negro slaves has been at last abolished. But unfortunately, if this detestable traffic in human bodies and human souls has been abolished in savage Africa, it is still kept up among our highly refined mothers and daughters. Has not the grand and holy sacrament of marriage been degraded to a vile traffic—to a mere matter of dollars? Are there not mothers who sell their daughters—are there not daughters who sell themselves to gain a rich husband? No matter how unworthy he may be, even though he has a heart as black as hell with sin—no matter! He is rich, and, nowadays, a cloak of gold covers a multitude of sins. And what the demon of avarice has joined, the demon of hate will soon put asunder.

There is a young man. He wishes to start in business; but money is wanting. He says to himself: "I must find a wife with a good round sum." He sets to work, he looks around him. Woe to the young girl on whom he fixes his choice! A thousand flattering words, a thousand professions of unswerving devotion, of undying love! The young girl so readily believes all! The parents, too, are gained, and the bargain is settled! Can God bless such marriages? Every one understands that some provision for marriage must be made. But, after all, money is only secondary. The chief thing is virtue, a suitable temperament, and especially the grace of God!

One day Themistocles was asked whether he would choose to marry his daughter to a poor man of merit, or to a worthless man of an estate. "I would," said Themistocles, "prefer a man without an estate to an estate without a man."

4. *They should consider well whether they will be able to fulfil the weighty duties of the married state.*

It is an obligation not to enter blindly upon the marriage state. How unwise would be that man who should assume the responsibility of a pilot on one of our rivers, without any previous study of either the river or the business! What folly would he exhibit who should attempt the duties of an engineer on a railroad or steamboat, in total ignorance of the nicely adjusted and powerful machinery placed under his control! And yet not more inconsistent would be those courses of conduct than his or hers who enters without reflection upon the duties of married life. For all the professions, trades, and callings in life, men and women prepare themselves by previous attention to their principles and duties. They study them, devote time and money and toil to them. Every imaginable case of difficulty or trial is considered according to the general principles of the trade or profession. Wherefore marriage, the most important relation in life, is not to be entered upon in hot haste or blind stupidity, but only after mature reflection upon the weighty duties of the married life.

Most assuredly, marriage is an obscure and difficult affair. See that young couple who are keeping company, who intend to be married! They hide from each other so carefully the true state of their temporal affairs! They pretend to wealth that they do not possess. The young man is, perhaps, some "count" in disguise, and the young lady a "wealthy heiress." After marriage, the young count turns out to be of no account, and the young heiress is rich only in debts and mortgages. The young couple hide from each other so carefully their faults, whims, and ill-humor! The young lady is, of course, an angel, a goddess, descended from the clouds to bless the earth by her presence; and the young man is one of nature's noblemen. But, alas! how soon after marriage comes the rude awakening from the sweet dream!

> Mit dem Gürtel, mit dem Schleier,
> Bricht der Schöne Wahn entzwei!

That young girl who appeared so gentle, so loving, before marriage, soon throws off the mask, and shows her true character—vain, giddy, slothful, whimsical, quarrelsome, and selfish. That young man, apparently so sober, industrious, and full of virtue and honor, shows his true character after marriage: he becomes a drunkard, a tyrant, a miser, and perhaps, what is even worse than all, a foul, beastly adulterer! Is not marriage, then, an obscure and difficult affair,—an affair for which we need special light and grace from God? A good, virtuous wife is a gift of God. (Ecclus. xxvi, 3.) Such a gift must be sought and obtained from God by prayer and by a virtuous life.

But this is not all. The consequences of marriage are more serious for time and for eternity. Marriage has grave and numerous obligations. The husband must love his wife, but that love must be chaste and holy. The wife must obey her husband, but not in things contrary to the law of God. The husband must bear patiently with the whims and failings of his wife; he must assist her in the way to heaven. A good wife, on the other hand, must be the guardian angel of her husband, "doubling his pleasures, and his cares dividing." Husband and wife have to bear patiently all the trials and hardships of the married life, and "their name is legion." They must bring up all their children in the holy fear and love of God: and that is not a very easy task—not as easy, certainly, as some foolish persons imagine.

Now, to fulfil all these grave duties, you need graces, very special graces: and to whom will God give these special graces? Only to those who pray and lead pure, virtuous lives.

If, then, you have had the misfortune in the past to fall into sin, do penance,—earnest penance for the future. Make at once a good general confession. Pray much, do good works, go often to the sacraments; otherwise, God may punish you for your sins, by permitting you to choose a husband or wife who will be a torment to you instead of a blessing. God forbid that you should imitate the conduct of those libertines who imagine that the only way to get a husband or wife is to run to every dance of the season!

Look at that young girl once so modest and devout! As soon as there is question of marriage, good-by to her devotions! She has thrown off the mask of piety and modesty. You will now find her foremost in the giddy dance. Her church is henceforth the ball-room, her prayer-book the love-sick novel; her eyes are fixed no longer on the crucifix, but on the adorable face of her gallant.

5. How should those about to be married prepare themselves for this sacrament?

1, *They should lead pure lives, and draw upon themselves God's blessing, by prayer and good works;* 2, *they should enter the married state with a pure and holy intention;* 3, *before they marry, they should make a good confession, receive holy communion, and, if possible, have a nuptial Mass.*

1. If we wish to reform the world, we must begin by reforming the manner of preparing for marriage. A holy marriage will bring God's blessing; it will produce good families, and good families will reform the world. If every family were virtuous, the whole world would be virtuous. But now we see nothing but misery and unhappiness in the greater part of married people.

But why are so many marriages unhappy? It is because so many receive the *sacrament* of matrimony *unworthily.* Marriage is a great sacrament: it is great on account of its author, God; it is great on account of what it represents—the union of our Lord and the Church; and it is great on account of its effects—of the blessings and graces which it bestows on all who receive it worthily. To receive it worthily, it must be approached in proper dispositions.

The most essential of these is to be in the state of grace. For, as matrimony is one of the sacraments of the living, it cannot be received by a person who is not in the state of grace, without becoming guilty of mortal sin. If persons were to be married in a state of sin, though the marriage would be valid, yet they would not receive the graces of the sacrament; nor is it certain that they will ever recover them, even by a good confession.

There is a married woman. She looks upon her husband as a tyrant; and, in fact, he treats her as if she were his most bitter enemy. There is another. She is vain, ill-humored, and whimsical. She treats her husband more like a servant than a partner for life. There is another. Herself and husband seem tied together, not by the bonds of love, but by the chains of hatred. One helps to drag the other down, hellward. What is the cause of all this? It is, in general, because they did not properly prepare themselves for the worthy reception of this holy sacrament.

As marriage, then, is a sacrament of the living, it must be received in the state of grace with a pure heart, with those dispositions with which holy communion is received. Hence, those who intend to marry must prepare for marriage, as a young girl prepares for the convent.

There is a girl who intends to enter the convent. Instead of spending her time in prayer, good reading, almsgiving, visiting the sick, and other works of charity, she goes to the dance, theatre, reads sentimental or immodest books, keeps company alone at night, at late hours, allows improper liberties. What do we think of her? Will she be apt to make a good nun? Is that the way to prepare for the convent? Now, going to the convent is no sacrament, but marriage is. St. Paul calls it a great sacrament and mystery. The holy sacrament of marriage is so sacred, its consequences so serious: and yet, of all the sacraments it is the least respected! For confirmation, for confession, for holy communion, in fact, for every other sacrament, people prepare themselves with great care; but, for the great sacrament of marriage, how do people usually prepare themselves?

Unhappily it is only too often the case that, after months and even years of sin,—sin at least in thought and desire, the young couple appear before the priest of God, if they do not even go before the magistrate or the preacher. They either make no confession at all, or, what is even worse, a sacrilegious confession; with brows crowned with roses, with laughing faces, they join hands to perpetrate an awful sacrilege!

Ah! how often are not the parents to blame for the unhappy marriages of their children! The mother speaks to the young girl only of the happiness (?) that awaits her. "My child," she says, "I shall miss you very much, but I do not wish to stand in the way of your happiness. You have been, indeed, very fortunate to find such a husband." And the young girl believes it all so readily. It is so natural, so sweet, for us all to dream of perfect happiness in this world! But soon, ah! too soon, comes the terrible awakening!

It is true, a mother must not discourage her daughter altogether, but she must tell her the truth; she must tell her that the life of a wife and mother must be, above all, one of self-denial and self-sacrifice. She must tell her that she will have to weep and to suffer; but she must tell her, also, that, if she is pure and virtuous, if she prepares properly for marriage, God will assist her by his grace. She must tell her that the marriage chain is heavy and galling,—so heavy, that she will not be able to bear it alone, that she must invoke the aid of God.

Poor girl! Why deceive her? Why rock her to sleep with the syren song of bright hopes that shall never be realized?

You Catholic mothers, you yourselves had once your bright dreams of happiness; but how have they been realized? And do you imagine that your daughters' married life will be happier than yours has been? Teach your children, then, to prepare well for marriage. Teach them to lead pure lives before marriage. Teach them to approach the altar with a pure heart, and to obtain God's blessing by fervent prayers, by works of penance and charity. Place them under the special protection of God. Soon, perhaps, they will have no one else to protect them.

2. Their motives of marriage should be pure, that is, they should marry neither for lust nor for money, but for the purpose for which marriage was instituted by Almighty God. "It is not good," said Almighty God, when he instituted marriage, "for man to be alone; let us make him a help like to himself," to assist him in the government of his family, in the management of his temporal affairs, in the good education of his children, in all the labors and toils of his life. Such, too, should be the motives of persons in getting married: mutual help, mutual sympathy, in going through the troubles and difficulties of this life, and in bearing its cares, pains, and sufferings; and mutual support in securing eternal happiness hereafter. The second motive which persons should have in view in getting married is to obtain a blessing in children—to bring them up for God, and increase the number of the elect.

When, therefore, a person is about to engage in the married state, he should lay aside all motives suggested by lust, and aim chiefly at God's honor and the salvation of his soul. The virtuous end which a Christian ought to propose to himself in so holy a state, was declared by the angel Raphael to young Tobias: "Thou shalt take the virgin," said the angel, "with the fear of the Lord, moved rather with the love of children than for lust." And with this intention Tobias married, for he said: "You know, O Lord! that I marry, not for self-gratification, or any such lustful views, but only for the sake of posterity, in which thy name be blessed for ever and ever." (Tob. viii, 9.) But "the devil has power," said the angel, "over those and prevails upon them, who in such a manner are married as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule which have not understanding."

The seven husbands of Sara were killed for entering the marriage state from unholy motives. They intended to defile the sanctity of marriage. If the devil does not always strangle immediately all those who defile the holy state of marriage, he afflicts them, by God's permission, with many other serious evils. How can they expect the blessing of God who enter the marriage state from motives of avarice or lust?

To enter the married state as a remedy against incontinency, is also another intention that is laudable, for St. Paul says: "For fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Though he declares to the unmarried and to widows: "It is good for them if they continue even as I;" yet he immediately adds: "But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry : for it is better to marry than to be burned." (1 Cor. vii, 8.) By these words the apostle shows that marriage is also intended as a remedy for those who are free to choose, and have not the gift of continency; and that, by means of it, scandal, which should be caused by incontinency, would be removed, and the ruin of their souls arrested. The laws of Sparta required a man to marry when he became of age. If he did not, he was liable to persecution. The salutary effect of this law was seen in the superior morality of the Spartans over the other people of Greece. The morality of the people of Ireland is one of the brightest gems in the crown of the "loved island of sorrow." The practice of early marriage among the Irish contributes, in a great measure, to this angelic virtue of chastity. The pernicious practice of marrying late in life is one of the chief causes of the licentiousness of gay and gallant nations.

Marriage is the only natural, proper, and safe state for the majority of persons living in the world. If one-third of the angelic host fell at the very first temptation, how can man, prone as he is to sin, hope to escape? If the saints of all ages subjected their bodies to the spirit by terrible penances, to overcome the allurements of the flesh, how can the pampered and luxurious Christians of these days, living in an atmosphere of seduction, mingling in a gay and wicked world, and thrown in constant contact with men who break all the commandments with perfect indifference,—how can these Christians hope to avoid the dangers that surround them, if they refuse to seek the safety that is presented to them in marriage, unless they make use of the supernatural means and preventives which few are willing to adopt?

If, therefore, one who is not under any obligation of leading a single life, finds that he has not received the gift of continency—which is a particular gift of God—and knowing his weakness, is afraid of himself, he may lawfully and laudably have recourse to marriage, to preserve himself from the danger of ruining his soul, to which that frailty might otherwise expose him.

It may, perhaps, be asked if it be unlawful to marry in consideration of riches, beauty, noble birth, or some other conveniences relating to the present life? But the answer is, that none of these things ought to be the only, nor the chief, intention in marriage; the chief end of marriage being the desire to be blessed with children, if it be the will of God. But these motives are not to be condemned when they are only secondary reasons for preferring one person who is possessed of them, to another who has them not. We do not find that Holy Scripture condemns the patriarch Jacob for having chosen Rachel for her beauty in preference to Lia. (Gen. xxiv.)

3. Persons who are about to be married should prepare themselves by a good confession. Confession is absolutely necessary for those who feel their conscience burdened with mortal sin; for, as we have already seen, by receiving the sacrament without being in the state of grace, we become guilty of a very great sacrilege. It may be said that perfect contrition is sufficient to justify the sinner, and obtain for him the grace of God. But how can we know whether or not we have that perfect contrition necessary to justify us? Besides, perfect contrition, in order to reconcile us with God, by obtaining his grace, should be accompanied with a wish or desire of going to confession as soon as we can. But how can he be supposed to have

the desire of going to confession who has, at that very time, every opportunity of confessing his sins? A good confession is, therefore, necessary for those who are in the state of mortal sin, in order "to receive worthily the sacrament of marriage," for it is the ordinary means established by Jesus Christ to obtain pardon of our sins. Besides, we know, from sad experience, that he who refuses to confess his sins before marriage, on the plea that he has perfect contrition, will not go to confession even within that month or the following one, nor very probably will he go at the following Easter-time.

The parties about to be married should, in going to confession, be very careful to make *a good confession;* for, we regret to say, a marriage-confession is but too often made in a negligent manner, so much so, that there is no confession in one's whole life that is made with less spiritual profit. The sacrament of penance, on the occasion of marriage, is too often approached without preparation, and with a mind full of distractions, which has very little thought of God and salvation, but is intent upon the vanity and pomps of the world. How many are there who confess in haste, without examen of conscience, without contrition, without any serious thought of amending their lives, and on that account commit two sacrileges: one by a bad confession, and another by receiving the sacrament of matrimony unworthily! How many are there who, being restored to the state of grace, relapse into sin before matrimony, by immodest desires, and, perhaps, immodest actions? You need not, I am sure, be told that such profanations bring down a secret curse upon such marriages; they bring down the vengeance of God, who is indignant at the commission of such sacrileges at a time when his graces are most necessary. To avert these dire calamities, persons about entering the married state should take some time to reflect on the step they are to take—retiring, for that purpose, for an hour or two each day during the week before the sacrament is to be received; examining their conscience, and praying to God that he may grant them true sorrow for their sins, and every grace to make a good confession.

Together with making a good confession, the parties about to be married should go to holy communion on the morning before, or the morning on which, they receive the sacrament of matrimony. It is true, there is no obligation of receiving communion as there is in making a good confession before marriage; but the Church strongly recommends that holy practice, for there is nothing better calculated to draw down the blessings of heaven on those who are preparing themselves for matrimony, than receiving holy communion. (As to the nuptial Mass and the ceremonies of marriage, see Question 7.)

4. Children should not marry without the consent of their parents. "Let them remember," says St. Alphonsus, "that it rarely happens that they can be excused from mortal sin, if they contract marriage against the will of their parents, particularly if they marry without the knowledge of their parents. From marriages contracted against the consent of parents, arise a thousand evils—disputes, hatred, and quarrels." Parents may refuse their consent, if the marriage would be a disgrace to the family and disturb its peace; or if it would prove highly detrimental to the child, or endanger the loss of religion. Parents cannot, without a just cause, prevent their children from marrying. On the other hand, children should, when they wish to marry, always endeavor to procure

the consent of their parents, except when it is certain that the parents will unjustly and unreasonably refuse their consent.

6. May a Catholic be married by a Protestant minister?

A Catholic who goes to a Protestant minister to be married commits a mortal sin, and is unworthy to receive the sacraments until he does true penance.

It is a most wicked and detestable thing that Catholics should ever so far forget all dictates of faith and piety as to be united in the bonds of matrimony before a heretical preacher, in contempt of the Church of God and of the sanctity of this sacrament. Such an act is a public apostasy from the Catholic faith; it separates the guilty parties from the body of Christ; it cuts them off from the communion of saints; it draws upon them the curse of God. "Bear not," says St. Paul, "the yoke together with unbelievers: for, what participation hath justice with injustice, or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what agreement hath Christ with Belial?" that is, the devil. Woe, therefore, to those who make themselves guilty of such an impious deed!

The blessing of God is needed upon all our actions; it is needed especially upon those actions which are of great importance. Not to care for the blessing of God, is to despise God himself. Such a contempt of God has often been severely punished, even in this life.

In the village of H———, Tyrol, there lately occurred a very striking instance of divine retribution. An inhabitant of the village was about sitting down to his dinner when a neighbor accosted him with the usual pious salutation: "*Gesegen's dir Gott!*" ("May God bless it.") "No occasion for a blessing," the scoffer replied; "when I am hungry, I will eat again." Shortly afterward this man was attacked with a disease of the stomach, in consequence of which he could eat no solid food, and the liquids of which he partook were immediately ejected by the rebellious stomach. After lingering a few months in this condition, devoured by hunger and reduced to a skeleton, the unfortunate man died. His punishment should teach those a lesson who go to be married before a Protestant minister, in contempt of God and of his blessing bestowed upon those who marry in Christ and his Church.

7. How is this sacrament received?

The parties declare, before the priest and two witnesses, that they take each other for husband and wife, whereupon the priest blesses their union.

Marriage, even among the heathens, is a natural and lawful union, sacred in the eyes of God. Catholic marriage, however, is, as we have seen, something different from the marriage of heathens, of Jews, of heretics. Among Catholics, marriage is something far higher, far nobler: it is a sacrament, a means of grace, and a holy state. It is as far above mere natural marriage as the religion of Christ is above mere natural religion. Among Catholics, marriage may be said to be next to the priesthood. The sacrament of the priesthood consecrates those who receive it, and separates them from the rest of the world by solemn and perpetual vows. At the same time, it confers on those that receive it worthily, distinct and especial graces. The priest is espoused to the Church, and bound by solemn vows to fulfil the duties of his state, to accept all its cares and sacrifices, even until death.

In like manner, the married couple are espoused to each other by the most solemn vows; they promise solemnly to fulfil all the duties, and accept all the cares and sacrifices, of their holy state, till death shall part them. The priest is consecrated; so are married people also consecrated to their state of life. There is drawn around them a mysterious circle, which it would be a sacrilege to cross.

Now, the holy Church has appointed the proper *manner* of receiving this great sacrament. It is the wish of the Church that the sacrament of matrimony should be received in the house of God. The house of God alone is the proper place in which to receive so great a sacrament, and to perform so high and solemn a religious function. Marriage, as we have said, is next to the priesthood. Now, where should the priest be ordained? In his own house—in his own parlor—at the convenience of friends and relations? Common-sense revolts at the bare thought of such a sacrilege. Even the heretics have more reverence for their preachers than to ordain them in a parlor. And is there nothing unbecoming in the celebration of a marriage in some hotel or parlor? Marriage is a sacrament. Therefore it should, if possible, be received on consecrated ground, in God's church, before God's altar: "We are children of the saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens who know not God." (Tob. viii, 4.)

When the affianced persons have come to the foot of the altar, with the witnesses whom they have chosen, and the relatives who accompany them, the priest, wearing a surplice and a white stole, comes to them and requires from each one the formal expression of consent, in these words: "N., wilt thou take N. here present for thy lawful wife, according to the rite of our holy mother the Church?" R.

"I will." "N., wilt thou take N. here present for thy lawful husband, according to the rite of our holy mother the Church?" R. "I will."

The priest then bids them join their right hands and blesses them, saying: "I join you together in marriage, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" thus acknowledging and ratifying the contract just made.

A ring, worn on the finger, will always serve as a remembrance of this holy alliance, contracted in the presence of God. The priest blesses it by the prayer of the Church: "Bless, O Lord! this ring which we bless in thy name, that she who shall wear it, keeping true faith to her spouse, may abide in thy peace and will, and ever live in mutual charity. Through Christ our Lord."

This wedding ring is the significant pledge of the investiture of authority, as in ancient times its bestowal was regarded as the delegation of all the husband's authority, and rendered the person so invested supreme over everything he possessed. That it is totally free from ornament intimates the perfect simplicity and plainness of married life. It is placed on the left hand, because it is nearest the heart; and on the fourth finger, on account of some supposed connection between that finger with the seat of life.

To call down a more abundant blessing on the newly married pair, the divine sacrifice of holy Mass is celebrated for them. The sacred blood of the Lamb without spot cements their union. After the consecration and the Lord's Prayer, the married pair come up again to the altar, and the priest turns toward them and prays over them: "O God, who, by the might of thy power, didst create all things out of nothing; who, when the beginnings of the universe were set in order, and man was made to the image of God, didst ordain the inseparable assistance of woman, in such wise that thou gavest beginning to her body out of the flesh of man, teaching thereby that, what it had pleased thee should be formed of one, it should never be lawful to put asunder! O God, who hast consecrated the bond of matrimony by such an excellent mystery, that, in the covenant of marriage, thou wouldst signify the sacrament of Christ and his Church! O God, by whom woman is joined to man, and society, as ordained from the beginning, is furnished with a blessing, which alone was not removed, either in punishment of original sin, or by the sentence of the deluge! look mercifully upon this thy handmaid, who, being now to be joined in wedlock, earnestly desires to be fortified with thy protection. May it be to her a yoke of love and peace; may she marry in Christ, faithful and chaste, and be an imitator of holy women. May she be amiable to her husband, like Rachel; wise, like Rebecca; long-lived and faithful, like Sara. May the author of sin have no share in any of her actions. May she remain constant to the faith and commandments; united to one spouse, may she fly all unlawful approaches; may she protect her weakness by the strength of discipline. May she be grave in bashfulness, venerable in modesty, learned in heavenly doctrine. May she be fruitful in offspring, approved and innocent; and may she arrive at the repose of the blessed in the heavenly kingdom; and may they both see their children's children, even to the third and fourth generation, and arrive at their desired old age. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord."

After a few moments the married persons receive holy communion. They become one heart with the pure, the loving, the faithful heart of Jesus. And this delightful and sanctifying union of our souls with the Son of God is the model to which the union, just contracted, should endeavor to become every day more conformable, while, at the same time, it is the inexhaustible source of the graces which make that resemblance perfect. Let Christian husbands and wives never forget this.

The divine mysteries conclude with the following benediction: "May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, be with you, and may he fulfil his blessing upon you; that you may see your children's children unto the third and fourth generation, and may afterward have everlasting life, without end, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen."

All these blessings are received by those only who are married according to the rites of the Church, that is, during the nuptial Mass.

The custom of marrying in the afternoon or at night is not commendable. At such marriages the Church uses only the simple ceremonies prescribed for Advent and Lent; so that the married couple lose many blessings which they need to bear the trials and sorrows of the future. What would you think if the priest would omit all the solemn prayers and anointings prescribed by the Church, and baptize your children simply with common water? Far from being satisfied, you would be scandalized at the priest's want of obedience to the Church, and of respect for the holy sacrament of baptism. What, then, are we to think of those Catholics who deliberately neglect the solemn blessings which the Church imparts to those who are married in the proper manner, according to her desire and spirit?

8. What are the duties of married people?

1, *They should always live together in peace and conjugal fidelity; 2, they should bring up their children in the fear and love of God.*

1. To live in peace and harmony, husband and wife must constantly nourish for each other a holy and patient love. The precept of charity obliges all men, but it obliges married people most strictly: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, cleansing her by the laver of water in the word of life. . . . So, also, ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself; for no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church." (Eph. v, 25-29.) Without such mutual love there can be no true peace and happiness. Man and wife, therefore, should be on their guard to avoid giving offence to each other in the beginning of their conversation. A very little thing can blast an infant blossom, and the breath of the South can shake the little rings of the vine when first they begin to curl like the locks of a new-weaned child; but when, by age and consolidation, they stiffen into the hardness of a stem, and have, by the warm embraces of the sun and the kisses of heaven, brought forth their clusters, they can endure the storms of the North and the loud noise of a tempest, without ever being broken. From the very beginning of married life, then, husband and wife must endeavor to increase in true Christian love for each other. The wife may have the key to every cupboard, but, if

she has not the key of her husband's heart, she wants that which should be hers above everything else. The husband may be very kind and respectful to his wife, but, if she is not his second self, there is much to deplore. To love each other with a very deep affection, it is necessary for them to feel that their interests are identical.

This love for each other must show itself by living in constant conjugal fidelity. The marriage bond is one of God's own making, and so close is this sacred union, that, in Holy Scripture, husband and wife are said to have one body: "They shall be two in one flesh." (Gen. ii, 24.) How wicked, then, and how abominable, is that sin which violates a union so intimate and holy! Sometimes females become less scrupulous after marriage than before, because they think they can sin with more impunity. But the eye of God is ever open, and he will punish them then more than ever, because their sin is greater, on account of the greater wrong done, and the violation of a holy sacrament. "What God hath joined together," said our Lord Jesus Christ, in words of solemn warning, "let no man put asunder." (Matt. xix, 6.) Woe, then, to the shameless woman who defiles in her own person the marriage sacrament, and tramples on her most sacred vows! God will revenge both himself and her husband, and visit her sin upon her guilty head. Woe to the guilty man who despises the warning of Jesus Christ, parting what he has joined together, and planting a poisoned dagger in his neighbor's bosom! "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." (Heb. xiii, 4.) In this matter, Christians should not trust even their good intentions, but fly from danger at its first approach, and pray that they may not fall into temptations. If the wife would be secure in that fidelity which she has vowed at the altar, she must never listen to strange and flattering tongues, nor allow herself to indulge an excessive love of society. She must shun all those fashions which are contrary to Christian modesty.

The love of the wife for the husband must show itself in a cheerful obedience to him in all lawful things: "Let women," says St. Paul, "be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church. He is the Saviour of his body. Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things." This subjection of wives to their husbands has been required by God from the beginning of the world. Although Eve bore the divine image, yet there was still a difference between Adam and Eve in this respect. In Adam, the divine image shone forth in a way peculiar to himself. For, just as God is the first beginning and ultimate end of man, so the man is the immediate beginning and end of woman; for, from man and for man was the woman created. Thus it follows that man has dominion over the whole of nature, not excepting woman.

St. Paul alludes to this secondary likeness of man to God, when he says: "The man, indeed, ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. For the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man." (1 Cor. xi, 7–9.) Thus we see that woman, even in her state of innocence, was in subjection to the man, being made for him as his helper and means for the propagation of the human race.

There is a twofold subjection: one servile, according to which the superior makes use of the subject for his own advantage; and of this kind was the subjection introduced after sin. But there is another subjection, economic and civil, according to which the superior makes use of those subject to him for their advantage and good; and such a subjection existed before sin. For the good of order would have been wanting in a human multitude, if some were not governed by others of greater wisdom. And thus, with a subjection of this sort, the woman is naturally subject to the man, because naturally man is gifted with greater prudence. The inequality of man is not excluded by a state of innocence.

But it was a willing subjection, free from trouble or annoyance—the loving service of a helpmate. After the fall, that subjection became, as the woman's penalty, hard and painful, and, more frequently than not, repugnant, as the whole history of woman to the coming of the gospel abundantly proves.

This natural repugnance to obedience will be considerably lessened by the husband, if he shows himself always kind to his wife, and endeavors, as much as possible, to anticipate her wants. If she sees that her husband tries to please her, she, on her part, will also try to please him. Thus, the fulfilment of their duties toward each other becomes easy and light.

2. *They should bring up their children in the fear and love of God.*

Marriage has its chief felicity in the family circle, and in the natural affection which preserves that magic ring. The father lives again in his children as he sees them "like olive branches round about his table;" and the mother rejoices in her little ones as special gifts of heaven: "Her children rise up and call her blessed." "They are mine, flesh and soul, mine, O my children! a portion of myself." Whether they are maimed or perfect, sickly or robust, each of them is a sacred deposit, of which the parent is to give an account to Him of whom he received it.

It is especially the mother who is destined by God to bring up children for heaven. This is her grand mission. What a happiness, what an honor, for a mother to give angels to heaven! Would to God she only knew the real dignity and importance of her mission, and comprehended the qualifications in the moral and religious order that best prepare her for the duties of her sublime calling! What mission can be more sublime, more sacred, what mission can be more meritorious before God, than that of giving to the young child the primary lessons of religion?

There is, indeed, nothing more honorable, nothing more meritorious, nothing which conducts to higher perfection, than to instruct children in their religious duties. This instruction of children is a royal, apostolic, angelic, and divine function. *Royal*, because the office of a king is to protect his people from danger. *Apostolic*, because our Lord commissioned apostles to instruct the nations, and, as St. Jerome says, thus made them the saviors of men. *Angelic*, because the angelical spirits in heaven enlighten, purify, and perfect one another according to their spheres, and their earthly mission is to labor without ceasing for the salvation of man. St. Peter Chrysologus calls those who instruct others in the way of salvation, "the substitutes of angels." Indeed, this mission of mothers is divine: they are called to carry on the very work of God himself. Everything that Almighty God has done from the creation of the world, and which he will continue to do to the end, has been, and will be, for the salvation of mankind. For this he sent his Son from heaven, who enlightened the world by his doctrine, and who still continues to instruct his people by his chosen disciples. Those mothers, then, who direct their children in the paths to heaven, who allure them from vice, who form them to virtue, may fitly be termed apostles, angels, and saviors. O what glory awaits those mothers who perform the office of angels, and even of God himself, in laboring for the salvation of the souls of their children! If this employment is honorable for mothers, it is also not less meritorious for them. What is the religious instruction of children but conferring, with inconceivable labor and fatigue, on a class of our race the weakest and most helpless, the greatest of all blessings? For, while the physical development of the child advances with age, it is not so with the mental; for religious instruction only can develop the noble faculties of the soul. The soul of a child, so to speak, would continue to live enshrouded in pagan darkness, if the mother did not impart and infuse the light of truth. All the gold in the world is but dross in comparison with true religious knowledge.

Our Saviour says: "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, even a cup of cold water, shall not lose his reward." (Matt. x, 42.) May we not infer that those mothers, who bestow upon children the treasures of divine knowledge, will receive an exceedingly great reward? If God denounces so severely those who scandalize little children: "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. xviii, 6), what recompense will mothers not receive who instruct and sanctify them?

Mothers who give their efforts and means to this object choose the surest way to appease the anger of God, and to insure their own salvation. They choose the best means of attaining a high degree of perfection. Almighty God gives to each the graces proper to his vocation. Mothers, therefore, who are devoted to the religious instruction of their children, must rest assured that God will give them extraordinary graces to arrive at perfection: "Whoever," says our Lord, "shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." (Matt. xviii, 5.) Whosoever, then, believes that our Saviour will not allow himself to be surpassed in liberality, must also believe that he will bestow his choicest blessings on those mothers who instruct their children in the knowledge of God and the love of virtue.

What obligations have not the "angels" of children "who always see the face of the Father who is in heaven" (Matt. xviii, 10), to pray for these mothers—their dear colleagues and charitable substitutes, who perform their office and hold their place on earth! The children will pray for their mothers, and God can refuse nothing to the prayers of children, and their supplications will ascend with the prayers of the angels.

Do you desire, O Christian mother! to be saved? Do you wish to acquire great treasures in heaven, and to attain great perfection in this life? Employ yourself diligently in the religious instruction of your children. Do you wish to gain the love of our Lord, and to deserve his protection? Teach your children to fear and love God: you cannot do anything more pleasing to his divine heart.

It is related in the Gospel that mothers brought to him little children, that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked them that brought them. And when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said to them: "Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God: and embracing them, and laying his hands on them, he blessed them." If Jesus was displeased with those who prevented little children from coming to him, what love and tenderness will he not have for those mothers by whose means they come to him?

O how consoled will they not be in their last hour, when they shall see the souls of those whom they prepared for heaven, accompanied by their good angels, surrounding their bed of death, forming, as it were, a guard to protect them from the snares and assaults of the enemy!

This is a happiness which those mothers may confidently expect who labor assiduously to give their children a good religious education. Ah! would to God, I say once more, that mothers would understand their sublime mission on earth!

Now, the education of children may be said to begin from the moment they open their eyes and ears to the sights and sounds of the world about them; and of these sights and sounds, the words and example of the mother are the most impressive and the most enduring. Of all lessons, those learned at the knees of a good mother sink deepest into the mind and heart, and last the longest. Many of the noblest and best men that ever lived, and adorned and benefited the world, have declared that, under God, they owed everything that was good and useful in their lives to the love of virtue and truthfulness, and piety and the fear of God, instilled into their hearts by the lips of a pious mother.

There lived, in the first ages of Christianity, a pious widow named Sophia. She had an only son, whom she dearly loved. She taught him one lesson, and this lesson she repeated from morning till night. It was this: "My son, you are in this world but to work and to suffer for God." The only book she gave him to read was the Lives of the Martyrs. The pictures on the wall described the sufferings of the same and of the King of the martyrs, our Lord Jesus Christ. As the child was about twelve years of age, the mother fell dangerously ill. She called him to her bedside and asked in a feeble voice: "My son, what lesson have I taught thee?" "To labor and suffer for God," answered he. "Thank God," said the mother, weeping for joy. "Now I can die in peace." The boy grew up to manhood. He labored, and suffered, and died for Christ. It was the great St. Clement of Ancyra. (Hungari.)

It is the special duty of a mother to plant and develop in the young and impressible minds of her children the seeds of virtue, love, reverence, and obedience, and to train, especially, her daughters, by precept and example, not to catch husbands that will give them splendid establishments, but to be, in due time, modest and affectionate wives, tender and judicious mothers, and prudent and careful housekeepers. This the father cannot do; and his interference, except by wise council, and to honor and sustain the mother, will generally be worse than nothing. The task devolves especially on the mother; for it demands the sympathy with children which is peculiar to the female heart, the strong maternal instinct implanted by nature, and directed by a judicious education; that blending of love and authority, sentiment and reason, sweetness and power, so characteristic of the noble and true-hearted woman, and which so admirably fit her to be loved and honored, only less than adored, in her own household. But, though the duties and responsibilities of mothers in this matter are the heaviest and most important for themselves, and for the society of all others, yet there are none which are more neglected.

This neglect may be owing, in great measure, to the fact that there are comparatively few who are qualified to train and form their children to early habits of piety, filial love and reverence, of obedience to God's law, and respect for authority. But what they can and should do, is to see that their sons, and especially their daughters, are educated in such a manner as adapts them to the destiny of their sex, and prepares them to find the centre of their affections in their home; their highest ambition in making it cheerful, bright, radiant, and happy. Whether destined to grace a magnificent palace, or to adorn the humble cottage of poverty, this should be the ideal aimed at in their education. They should be trained to love home, and to find their pleasure in sharing its cares and performing its duties, however arduous or painful.

There are, as I have said, comparatively few mothers qualified to give their daughters such an education, especially in our own country; for, comparatively few have received such an education themselves, or are able fully to appreciate its importance. They can find little help in the fashionable boarding-schools for finishing young men and young ladies; and, in general, these schools only aggravate the evils to be cured. The best and only respectable schools for children that we have in the country are the conventual schools taught by men and women consecrated to God, and specially devoted to the work of education. These schools, indeed, are not always all that might be wished. The religious cannot, certainly, supply the place of the father and mother in giving their pupils that practical home-training so necessary, and which can be given only by parents who have themselves been properly educated; but they go as far as is possible in remedying the defects of the present generation of parents, and in counteracting their follies and vain ambitions. With all the faults that can be alleged against any of them, the conventual schools, even as they are, it must be conceded, are infinitely the best schools for children in the land, and, upon the whole, worthy of the high praise and liberal patronage their devotedness and disinterestedness secure them. We have seldom found their graduates weak and sickly sentimentalists. They develop in their pupils a cheerful and healthy tone, and a high sense of duty; give them solid moral, religious instruction; cultivate successfully their moral and religious affections; refine their manners, purify their tastes, and send them out feeling that life is serious, life is earnest, and resolved to act under a deep sense of their personal responsibilities, and to meet whatever may be their lot with brave hearts, and without murmuring and repining.

The editor of the *New York Herald* prefaces an account of a Catholic academy with the following remarks:—

"However divided public opinion may be as to secular and religious schools; no matter what differences in opinion may exist in the community as to the policy of aiding or discouraging purely sectarian systems of education, there can be but little opposition from any quarter to the verdict of experience given by many thousand families, that these devoted men and women—Brothers and Sisters of the Catholic Church—are the best teachers of young children, the safest instructors in this age of loose, worldly, and rampant New-Englandism. Those matters of education which make the gentleman and lady, are imbued with those principles which have made our parents our pride and boast. Those of us who cavil at the pretensions of Catholics, sneer at their assumption, and ridicule their observances, must acknowledge that the Brothers and Sisters are far ahead and above any organization of the sort of which Protestantism can boast. The self-sacrifice, the devotion, the single-mindedness, the calm trust in the power unseen, the humility of manner and rare unselfishness which characterize the Brothers and Sisters, have no parallel in any organization of the reformed faith. The war placed the claims of these devoted men and women fairly before the country; but these religious of the different branches have, in peace, 'victories no less renowned than in war.' Educating the poor children, directing the untutored mind of the youthful alien savage in our midst, or holding the beacon of intellectual advancement bright and burning before the male and female youth of the country, and beckoning them to advance, they are ever doing a good and noble work."

Let parents, then, always remember that the best, the most important, and the most necessary of inheritances to be left to their children is a good, practical, religious education.

9. How long does the bond of marriage last?

Marriage lasts until either the husband or the wife is dead.

That the bond of marriage lasts until either the husband or the wife is dead, follows from the very nature of the end of marriage itself, and still more from the institution and ordinance of Almighty God. The nature and end of marriage, as we have shown, is the propagation of mankind and the education of children, and also that the married parties may be a mutual help and comfort to each other during their days in this world. Now, it is evident that, on both these grounds, the nature of marriage requires that "the bond or tie" be never broken.

That mankind should be propagated, it is essential that the bond of marriage should remain unbroken. Man is different from all other creatures when he first comes into the world. The different other creatures, when they come into the world, require very little attention from the male parent, as the female can sufficiently support them until they can provide for themselves, which they do in a very short time. Man, on the contrary, stands in need of the attention of both father and mother during his infancy. He requires the attention of the mother, that he may be nursed and tended; and the attention of the father, in order that all necessaries, both for mother and child, may be procured by him: and this necessity of attention on the part of the father is not of short duration, as is the case with animals, but must continue for a very long time, as the child cannot, for many years, be able to provide for himself.

The education of a child also requires the united care of father and mother; for, from the dawn of reason until manhood, redoubled attention on their part is required, that the child may be educated properly, whether as a man, a citizen, or a Christian. Now, if the "bond or tie of marriage" could be broken, and if it were, in any case, lawful for married people to separate so as to be bound no longer by the marriage tie, many would soon avail themselves of the liberty allowed; and then a door would be opened, not only to the destruction of children, both as to their support and education, but likewise to debaucheries and an universal corruption of manners, that must be of infinite prejudice to the multiplication of mankind, which is the end of marriage.

Besides, what kind of solid comfort could the married people have in each other, if their marriage was not indissoluble? It is this indissolubility of marriage which makes the parties enter, with all their heart, into the views of their mutual interest. It is this which invincibly fixes their affections on their common concerns. It is this which gives a permanency to their love for each other. In a word, the indissolubility of marriage is the greatest incentive to make them bear their crosses, and put up with anything disagreeable in each other's tempers, and carefully to avoid giving any just handle of discontent to each other. They are joined together for better and for worse; they are married, and can no more be separated while life remains; therefore, they must make the best of it they can, and content themselves. But, on the contrary, if "the bond or tie of marriage" were dissoluble, it would, at the bottom, differ nothing from the state of concubinage, and be attended with all its bad consequences. Again, if we look on marriage as a civil contract, its indissolubility is no less manifest. For the good and happiness of the state being the end of marriage as a civil contract, this end could not be procured if the bond of marriage was dissoluble; because abandoned and neglected children, endless dissensions in families, and confusion about the division of their property, being the natural consequences of the dissolubility of marriage, must necessarily be a source of great misery to society.

There is a man in whose heart there is a fearful struggle between conscience on the one hand, and blind, brutish passion on the other. His wife, that wife whom he once loved so dearly, has become hateful to him. Perhaps she has lost the charm of beauty which once fascinated his heart. Another stands before him; she is young, she is beautiful. Protestantism, like the tempter of hell, whispers in his ear: "Sue for a divorce. The marriage bond can be broken. Youth and beauty may yet be yours." And the voice of conscience, the voice of God, is stifled. Brutish passion conquers. Divorce is sought and obtained, and the poor wife is cast away, and left heart-broken and companionless. And the children of such a marriage,—who shall care for them? Who shall teach them the virtues of obedience and charity? How can they respect a divorced mother, an adulterous father? No, these children become naturally the curse of society. They fill our prisons, our hospitals, the brothels.

On the contrary, if that man is a Catholic, the holy Church speaks to him in solemn warning: "See!" she says, "you took that wife in the day of her early joy and beauty. She gave you her young heart before the altar; you swore before God and his angels to be faithful to her until death. I declare to you, then, that, at the peril of your immortal soul, you must keep that union perpetual. That union shall end only when you have stood by her death-bed, when you have knelt at her grave."

10. Can the bond ot marriage be ever dissolved?

No; for Christ says: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." (*Matt. xix*, 6.)

We have already said that the tie by which the sacrament of matrimony unites the married is indissoluble. The Jew might, in certain cases, separate from his wife in order to be united to another, for his marriage represented the union of the Lord with the synagogue, which was to be repudiated. But the Christian can never choose another wife in the lifetime of the first, without thereby declaring that Christ has renounced his Church. Divorce therefore is essentially Jewish, and by no means Christian: "Whosoever," says Christ, "shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her; and if the wife shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery." (Mark x, 11.) Therefore, "the woman," says St. Paul, "that has a husband is bound to the law" (which subjects her to her husband) "as long as her husband liveth; if she be joined to another man whilst her husband liveth, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her husband be dead, she is free, so that she is not an adulteress if she be married to another man." (Rom. vii, 23.) And in another place, the same apostle says: "To them that are married the Lord commandeth that the wife depart not from her husband, and, if she have departed, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and that the husband put not away his wife." These clear statements explain the meaning of the answer which our dear Saviour made to the question of the Pharisees: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" He replied, that marriage was, by its original institution, indissoluble, and that, consequently, what God had joined together, no man should put asunder. (Matt. xix, 6.) They objected that Moses had, in certain cases, commanded letters of divorce and separation to be given. Commanded? "No," he replied, "it is true that, by reason of the hardness of your hearts, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you that whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery." Thus did our Saviour twice declare that Christian marriage, brought back to its primitive laws, could not be dissolved. From this he concludes, in the most general terms, that whoever married a woman put away by her husband, became an adulterer. In the case, then, of the infidelity of the wife, our Saviour only authorizes the husband to put her away, but by no means to take another; for, if he takes another, he is an adulterer, according to the plain declaration of our Lord. As this is the law of God, the Church cannot give leave that it should be broken. And so we find, in the history of the Church, that the greatest inducements could not prevail on the head of the Church to grant a dissolution of a true marriage.

The Catholic Church has always regarded Christian marriage as the corner-stone of society; and at that corner-stone have the pastors of the Church stood guard for eighteen centuries, insisting that Christian marriage is one, holy, and indissoluble. Woman, weak and unprotected, has always found at Rome that guarantee which was refused her by him who had sworn at the altar of God to love her and to cherish her till death. Whilst, in the nations which Protestantism tore from the bosom of the Church, the sacred laws of matrimony are trampled in the dust; whilst the statistics of these nations hold up to the world the sad spectacle of divorces almost as numerous as marriages, of separations of husband from wife, and wife from husband, for the most trivial causes, thus granting to lust the widest margin of license, and legalizing concubinage and adultery: whilst the nineteenth century records in its annals the existence of a community of licentious polygamists within the borders of one of the most civilized countries of the earth,—we have yet to see the decree emanating from Rome that would permit even a beggar to repudiate his lawful wife, in order to give his affections to an adulteress.

The female portion of our race would always have sunk back into a new slavery, had not the popes entered the breach for the protection of the unity, the sanctity, the indissolubility, of matrimony. In the midst of the barbarous ages, during which the conqueror and warrior swayed the sceptre of empire, and kings and petty tyrants acknowledged no other right but that of force, it was the popes who opposed their authority, like a wall of brass, to the sensuality and the passions of the mighty ones of the earth, and stood forth as the protectors of innocence and outraged virtue, as the champions of the rights of women against the wanton excesses of tyrannical husbands, by enforcing, in their full severity, the laws of Christian marriage. If Christian Europe is not covered with harems; if polygamy has never gained a foothold in Europe; if, with the indissolubility and sanctity of matrimony, the palladium of European civilization has been saved from destruction, it is all owing to the pastors of the Church. "If the popes," says the Protestant Von Müller,—"if the popes could hold up no other merit than that which they gained by protecting monogamy against the brutal lusts of those in power, notwithstanding bribes, threats, and persecutions, that alone would render them immortal for all future ages."

And how had they to battle till they had gained this merit? What sufferings had they to endure, what trials to undergo? When King Lothaire, in the ninth century, repudiated his lawful wife, in order to live with a concubine, Pope Nicholas I at once took upon himself the defence of the rights and of the honor of the unhappy wife. All the arts of an intriguing policy were plied, but Nicholas remained unshaken; threats were used, but Nicholas remained firm. At last the king's brother, Louis II, appears with an army before the walls of Rome, in order to compel the pope to yield. It is useless—Nicholas swerves not from the line of duty. Rome is besieged; the priests and people are maltreated and plundered; sanctuaries are desecrated; the cross is torn down and trampled under foot, and, in the midst of these scenes of blood and sacrilege, Nicholas flies to the church of St. Peter. There he is besieged by the army of the emperor for two days and two nights; left without food or drink, he is willing to die of starvation on the tomb of St. Peter, rather than yield to a brutal tyrant and sacrifice the sanctity of Christian marriage, the law of life of Christian society. And the perseverance of Nicholas I was crowned with victory. He had to contend against a licentious king, who was tired of restraint; against an emperor, who, with an army at his heels, came to enforce his brother's unjust demands; against two councils of venal bishops: the one at Metz, the other at Aix-la-Chapelle, who had sanctioned the scandals of the adulterous monarch. Yet, with all this opposition, and the suffering it cost him, the pope succeeded in procuring the acknowledgment of the rights of an injured woman. And during succeeding ages, we find Gregory V carrying on a similar combat against King Robert, and Urban II against King Philip of France. In the thirteenth century, Philip Augustus, mightier than his predecessors, set to work all the levers of power, in order to move the pope to divorce him from his wife Ingelburgis. Hear the noble answer of the great Innocent III:—

"Since, by the grace of God, we have the firm and unshaken will never to separate ourselves from justice and truth, neither moved by petitions, nor bribed by presents, neither induced by love, nor intimidated by hate, we will continue to go on in the royal path, turning neither to the right nor to the left; and we judge without any respect to persons, since God himself does not respect persons."

After the death of his first wife, Isabella, Philip Augustus wished to gain the favor of Denmark by marrying Ingelburgis. The union had hardly been solemnized, when he wished to be divorced from her. A council of venal bishops assembled at Compiegne, and annulled his lawful marriage. The queen, poor woman, was summoned before her judges, and the sentence was read and translated to her. She could not speak the language of France, so her only cry was, "Rome!" And Rome heard her cry of distress, and came to her rescue. Innocent III needed the alliance of France in the troubles in which he was engaged with Germany; Innocent III needed the assistance of France for the Crusade; yet Innocent III sent Peter of Capua as legate to France; a council is convoked by the legate of the pope; Philip refuses to appear, in spite of the summons, and the whole of the kingdom of Philip is placed under interdict. Philip's rage knows no bounds; bishops are banished, his lawful wife is imprisoned, and the king vents his rage on the clergy of France. The barons, at last, appeal against Philip to the sword. The king complains to the pope of the harshness of the legate, and, when Innocent only confirms the sentence of the legate, the king exclaims: "Happy Saladin! he had no pope!" Yet the king was forced to obey. When he asked the barons assembled in council, "What must I do?" their answer was: "Obey the pope; put away Agnes, and restore Ingelburgis." And, thanks to the severity of Innocent III, Philip repudiated the concubine, and restored Ingelburgis to her rights as wife and queen.

Hear what the Protestant Hurter says in his Life of Innocent: "If Christianity has not been thrown aside, as a worthless creed, into some isolated corner of the world; if it has not, like the sects of India, been reduced to a mere theory; if its European vitality has outlived the voluptuous effeminacy of the East, it is due to the watchful severity of the Roman Pontiffs—to their increasing care to maintain the principles of authority in the Church."

As often as we look to England, that land of perfidy and deceit, we are reminded of the words of Innocent III to Philip Augustus. We see Clement using them as his principles in his conduct toward the royal brute, Henry VIII. Catharine of Aragon, the lawful wife of Henry, had been repudiated by her disgraceful husband, and it was again to Rome she appealed for protection. Clement remonstrated with Henry. The monarch calls the pope hard names. Clement repeats, "Thou shalt not commit adultery!" Henry threatens to tear England from the Church, he does it; still Clement insists, "Thou shalt not commit adultery!" Fisher and More go to bleed out their lives at Tyburn; still the pope repeats, "Thou shalt not commit adultery!" The firmness of the pope cost England's loss to the Church. It cost the pope bitter tears, and he prayed to heaven not to visit on the people of England the crimes of the despot. He prayed for the conversion of the nation; but sacrifice the sanctity, the indissolubility, of matrimony—that he could never do; abandon helpless woman to the brutality of men who were tired of the restraints of morality—no, that the pope could never permit. If the court, if the palace, if the domestic hearth, refused a shelter, Rome was always open, a refuge to injured and downtrodden innocence.

"One must obey God rather than man." This has ever been the language of the Church, whenever there was question of defending the laws of God against the powers of the earth; and in thus defending the laws of God, she has always shown herself the true Church and faithful spouse of Jesus Christ.

11. Can married people be lawfully separated?

Yes, they can, by the authority of the Church, for very grave reasons; but one party cannot marry again whilst the other is alive.

The Church can grant a divorce in this sense, not of breaking the bond of marriage, but authorizing the separation of man and wife. An exception of this sort is made by our Lord himself, when he says: "Whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication," that is, adultery. It is plain that only a separation was here meant, and not a dissolution of the bond of marriage; for our Lord adds, that "he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." (Luke xvi, 18.) And St. Paul commands that the wife should not depart from her husband, "and if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." (1 Cor. vii, 11.) This is the difference between the mere contract of marriage, and marriage raised to the dignity of a sacrament.

The Jews were permitted to put away their wives, and the bond of marriage was then dissolved. So the Church can dispense, for a grave cause, from the mere contract of marriage, when, as in the case of unbaptized persons, the sacrament of matrimony has not been received. But among Christians the bond of the sacrament of matrimony is indissoluble, and separation is only sanctioned for some grave cause, such as, 1, adultery; 2, one of the parties being unable to live with the other without great danger of losing faith, or falling into grievous sin; or, 3, from the mutual consent of the parties, in order that they may enter religion. But this step is not easily or frequently permitted.

Moreover, if there be any cause which renders either of the parties incapable of contracting matrimony, the Church can, upon inquiring into the matter, and finding it to be so, declare the marriage null. This declaration of the Church has sometimes been mistaken for a dissolving of the marriage; but, in reality, it is only declaring that there never was any real marriage at all because of some impediment which made the contract invalid.

The Church can also dissolve a marriage when it has not been ratified and sealed by the parties living together as man and wife, or, as it is called, "consummated." When it has been consummated, the Church cannot dissolve it; but, till then, it can be dissolved, if either party has a vocation to religion. This has been permitted by the tradition of the Church, and also because, being known to be permitted, it becomes a condition of the contract.

Now it may be asked: Is a separation advisable whenever it is permitted by the law? St. Paul tells us that what is permitted is not always expedient. (1 Cor. x, 23.) Let, therefore, every married woman who wishes to be separated from her husband, remember that the most majestic kingdom for her to reign in, is home. A woman nowhere looks more lovely, more truly great, more fascinating, and more really beautiful and useful than when in her own house, surrounded by her children, giving them what instruction she is capable of, or devising some plan of intellectual entertainment. Depend on it that this is the grandest position in this world for a woman; and this home audience is nearer and sweeter to the affectionate heart of a mother whose brain is properly developed, than all the applause and flatteries that the outer world can bestow. It is not in the court-room, the pulpit, and the rostrum, but it is among the household congregation, that woman's influence can achieve so much, and reign paramount.

When God created man in his own image, he said: "It is not good that man should live alone: I will make him a helpmate." Now, had God meant to create merely a companion capable of following the same pursuits, and capable of the same herculean labors that evidently are meant to be man's destiny, why, he would have made *another man.* But no! When God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, he took out one of his ribs, and made a woman —a being in EVERY WAY THE COMPLEMENT OF MAN. And, after they ate of the tree of knowledge, God said to the woman, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall RULE *over thee.*" And unto Adam he said: "Because thou hast *hearkened* unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree which I commanded thee, saying, *Thou shalt* not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;" thus plainly demonstrating to us that MAN was meant to *rule.* Bear in mind that God was *angry* because Adam HEARKENED unto the voice of his WIFE; and Adam called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. So it may clearly be seen that woman was meant to attend to the duties of a mother in caring for her offspring, and man was intended to labor as the provider for her whom he chose as a helpmate, as well as for the entire household. Woman has natural nourishment sent to her for the babe long before she is able to leave her couch. Does not all this prove to every thinking person that it is the woman's sphere and calling to stay with her husband and children?

Indeed, the good and perfection of women consist in remaining contented in the place which God has assigned them, and in performing well the duties of their divine calling. If the hand wishes to be in the place of the eye, and the eye wishes to be where the hand is, they become burdensome, and disturb the good order and harmony of the body. Now, it is the same with the members of the social body. If women are in the place, or engaged in the occupation, which God has chosen for them, they enjoy a profound peace; they rest under his protection; they are nourished by his grace; they are enriched by his blessings, and work out their eternal happiness with but little pain.

This truth, however, is considered by many women as one of trifling importance; they seem not to care whether they live up to their divine calling or not. The Holy Ghost, however, admonishes every one thus: "Let every man abide in the vocation to which he was called" (1 Cor. vii, 20); for, "blessed is the man that shall continue in wisdom . . . and that considereth her ways in his heart." (Ecclus. xiv, 22, 23.) Blessed is that woman who well considers her divine calling, penetrates into and admires its greatness, and endeavors, with all her strength and heart, to comply with all its duties. One of the most usual temptations which the arch-enemy of mankind makes use of to destroy women's happiness, in the present day, is to excite in them disgust and dissatisfaction for their divine calling. Hence it is that we so often hear them complain of their state of life; they fancy that, by changing their condition of life, they shall fare better: yes, provided they change themselves. Would to God they were sworn enemies of these useless, dangerous, and bad desires! God wills to speak to them amidst the thorns, and out of the midst of the bush (Exod. iii, 2); and they wish him to speak to them in "the whistling of a gentle air." (3 Kings, xix, 12.) They ought, then, to remain on board the ship in which they are, in order to cross from this life to the other; and they ought to remain there willingly and with affection. Let them not think of anything else; let them not wish for that which they are not, but let them earnestly desire to be the very best of what they are. Let them endeavor to do their best to perfect themselves where they are, and to bear courageously all the crosses, light or heavy, that they may encounter. Let them *believe that this is the leading principle, and yet the one least understood in the Christian life.* Every one follows his own taste; very few place their happiness in fulfilling their duty according to the pleasure of our Lord. What is the use of building castles in the air, when we are obliged to live on earth? "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that leaveth his place" (Prov. xxvii, 8), his occupation or station of life. Let every woman remain firm in her calling, if she wishes to insure her tranquillity of mind, her peace of heart, her temporal and eternal happiness.

To become unfaithful to their vocation is, for women, to suffer as many pangs as a limb which, through some accident, has been wrenched out of place. They are continually tormented by evil spirits, who have power over a soul that is out of its proper sphere. They are no longer under the protection of God, since they have withdrawn from his guidance, and voluntarily abandoned his watchful providence. They fall often into grievous sins, because they are not sustained by the grace which belongs to the state in which God desires them to be. A woman, therefore, can never show her greatness better than by cheerfully accepting the calling for which the Creator evidently intended her; that is, for *woman, wife, and mother*, as long as she lives.

The Church, it is true, has power to separate husband and wife for grave reasons: Christ also had power to come down from the cross. But did he make use of it? He preferred to die on it, in order to redeem us and obtain for us the graces which enable us to bear our crosses courageously and patiently until death. It has never been heard that any one became a saint and merited heaven by trying to escape the crosses unavoidably connected with his state of life.

"When you married your husband," said a priest one day to a woman, "you married also all his faults and the tribulations of the married state, and that for life."

Women, no doubt, undergo many wrongs, and are obliged to suffer many hardships. It is hard for the poor wife to have to maintain a lazy, idle, drunken vagabond of a husband, and three or four children into the bargain; it is hard for the wife, delicately reared, accomplished, fitted to adorn the most intellectual, graceful, and polished society, accustomed to every luxury that wealth can procure, to find herself a widow reduced to poverty, with a family of young children to support, and unable to obtain any employment for which she is fitted as the means of supporting them.

But women seldom suffer alone. Men suffer too. It is no less hard for the poor, industrious, hard-working man, to find what he earns wasted by an idle, extravagant, incompetent, and heedless wife, who prefers gadding and gossiping to taking care of her household. And how much easier does the man find his lot who is reduced from affluence to poverty, a widower with three or four motherless children to provide for?

The reduction from affluence to poverty is sometimes the fault of the wife as well as of the husband. It is usually their joint fault. Women have wrongs, so have men. There is much wrong on both sides; much suffering, and much needless suffering, in life. We know men often wrong women, and cause them great suffering by their selfishness, tyranny, and brutality; whether more than women, by their follies and caprices, cause men, we shall not undertake to determine.

Women are neither so wronged nor so helpless as they often pretend. Men can be brutal, and women can tease and provoke. It ill becomes men to charge to women alone what is wrong and painful in their condition; and it is equally wrong for women to charge to men alone what they have to suffer. Both men and women are equally responsible for whatever is wrong in their common lot. Both men and women might be, and ought to be, better than they are.

In this world, "good is set against evil, and life against death, and so look upon all the works of the Most High.

Two and two, and one against another." (Ecclus. xxxii, 15.) Lucifer was set against St. Michael; Cain against Abel; Esau against Jacob; the sons of Jacob against their youngest brother Joseph; Absalom against Solomon; the Roman emperors against the apostles; Brother Elias against St. Francis of Assisium; heresy against orthodoxy of faith. Name me a country, a city, a village, a family, where we do not see those two elements combating each other: "There must be scandals," said our Lord. Strange to say, God permits, for wise ends, that even the holiest of men be sometimes diametrically opposed to one another. It is also for a very wise end that the faults of a husband are set against his wife, and the faults of a wife against her husband; and this end is that, by mutual charity and forbearance, they may sanctify themselves and gain heaven.

It is in a world of trial we live,—a world in which there are wrongs of all sorts, and sufferings of all kinds. We have lost paradise, and cannot regain it in this world. We must go through the valley of the shadow of death before reëntering it. We cannot make earth heaven, and there is no use in trying; and, least of all, can married people do it by complaining so much of the tribulations of their state of life, or by trying to get out of them by applying for a separation. Did St. Paul renounce his apostleship on account of the contradictions and persecutions with which he met on the part of the Jews, the Gentiles, and his own brethren? Did St. Peter give up the government of the Church in order to escape crucifixion? The husband of St. Monica was a heathen. She suffered from him more than can be told. Yet she never thought of leaving him. She was patient with him for seventeen years, and at last succeeded in converting him. Had she left him, he would have died a heathen, and his soul would have been lost forever. And we read of St. Elizabeth, wife of Dionysius, King of Portugal, that she made it her principal study to pay to her husband the most dutiful respect, love, and obedience, and bore his injuries with invincible meekness and patience. Though Dionysius was a friend of justice, and a valiant, bountiful, and compassionate prince, yet he was, in his youth, a worldly man, and defiled the sanctity of the nuptial bed with abominable lusts. The good queen used all her endeavors to reclaim him, grieving most sensibly for the offence to God, and the scandal given to the people; and she never ceased to weep herself, and to procure the prayers of others for his conversion. She strove to gain him only by courtesy, and with constant sweetness and cheerfulness cherished his illegitimate children, and took great care of their education. By these means she softened the heart of the king, who, by the succor of a powerful grace, rose out of the filthy puddle in which he had wallowed for a long time, and kept ever after the fidelity that was due to his virtuous consort. His extraordinary virtues, particularly his liberality, justice, and constancy, are highly extolled by the Portugese; and after his entire conversion, he was the idol and glory of his people. (Alban Butler.)

To imitate these examples is more honorable and glorious before God and men than to obtain a separation, written even in letters of gold by the pope; it is more meritorious for heaven than to live on bread and water for fifty years in a state of separation.

12. Is a promise of marriage binding in conscience?
Yes; as long as no grave reason exists for breaking it.

"Marry in haste and repent at leisure." This is an adage as old as the hills. No doubt, many unfortunates have married in haste and repented at leisure. The first step to a hasty marriage is a hasty promise of marriage. Such a promise should not be made in haste, for a promise of marriage is binding in conscience. When a man and a woman, therefore, engage themselves under a mutual promise of marriage, it would be unlawful, and a great sin, for either to marry another; because it would be a manifest injury to the one to whom the promise had been broken. The obligation of such a promise lasts as long as no grave reason exists for breaking it. A young man, then, as well as a young woman, should be rather slow in making a promise of marriage; and be still more slow in the choice of the person to whom the promise of marriage is to be made.

Let a young man remember that it was a woman that brought sin and death into the world—Eve; and it was a woman also that brought us life and hope and God himself—the Blessed Virgin Mary. Therefore, woman always was, and still is, powerful for good or evil. Hence it is that God in Holy Writ praises so highly a good woman, and blames so severely the woman that is wicked. A good, virtuous wife is a great treasure; her worth is beyond compare. But, "better dwell in a desert than with a woman who is ill-tempered and quarrelsome." (Prov. xxi, 19.) "A prudent woman builds up her house; a foolish or wicked woman tears down that which is built." (Ibid. xiv, 1.) In short, the weal or woe of the entire human race depends in a great measure upon the conduct of women.

It is woman that bears the human race beneath her heart. It is woman that brings forth and nourishes and trains the human race from the cradle to the grave. It is she who smiles upon our infant eyes in the very dawning of life; it is she who gently closes our eyes in death. Hence, a young man, who intends to be married soon, should find out, first, whether the young person whom he wishes to have for his wife was educated as woman, not as man. Woman is not needed as man; she is needed as woman—to do, not what man can do as well as she, but what man cannot do. Woman was created to be a wife and a mother: that is her destiny. To that destiny all her instincts point, and for it nature has specially qualified her. Her proper sphere is home, and her proper function is the care of the household, to manage a family, take care of children, and attend to their early training. For this she is endowed with patience, endurance, passive courage, quick sensibilities, a sympathetic nature, and great executive and administrative ability. She was born to be a queen in her own household, and make home cheerful, bright, and happy. There it is that she is really great, noble, almost divine. Now, "could you meet a reasonable woman, fair without vanity, rich without pride, discreet though witty, learned yet very humble, that has no ear for flattery, no tongue for scandal; one who never reads romances; who loves to listen better than to talk, and rather than be gadding would sit quiet,"—she could be expected to become a good wife and mother and a faithful companion in life, especially so, if she has been brought up a good practical Catholic.

But what man of sense, what man who longs for a faithful companion and dutiful wife, would think of marrying a woman of fashion, whose mornings are passed in bed over a sensational novel, whose afternoons are spent at the perfumer's where she purchases her complexion; at the goldsmith's and the milliner's where she gets her figure; whose evenings are danced away in the ball-room? A woman who would feel quite ashamed should she be ignorant of the name of the last new opera and its composer, but would feel quite indignant if she were asked whether she knew how to make soup, or broil a beefsteak or mend stockings? A woman, in whom he can notice a madness beyond description for dress, theatres, watering-places, and all kinds of worldly amusements? There is, indeed, in the fashionable woman of the day, nothing noble, nothing that a man could love, nothing to make a man happy. She is not fit to be a good wife, mother, and housekeeper. As wife, she forgets what she owes to her husband, is capricious and vain, often light and frivolous, extravagant and foolish, bent on having her own way, though ruinous to the family, and generally contriving, by coaxings, blandishments or pouting, to get it. She holds obedience in horror, and seeks only to govern her husband and all around her.

As mother, she not only neglects, but disdains, the retired and simple domestic virtues, and scorns to be tied down to the modest but essential duties—the drudgery, she calls it—of mothers; she manages to be relieved of household cares, especially of child-bearing, and of the duty of bringing up children. She represses her maternal instincts; wherefore the horrible crime of infanticide before birth has now become so fearfully prevalent, that the American nation is actually threatened with extinction. If she condescends to have a blessing in one or two children, she sets them an ill example; for, if children see that their mother, as a wife, forgets to honor and obey her husband,

and always wants to have her own way with him, they soon lose all respect for her, and insist on having their own way with her, and usually succeed.

As housekeeper, she devotes her time to pleasure or amusement, wasting her life in luxurious ease, in reading sentimental or sensational novels, or in following the caprices of fashion. Thus she lets the household go to ruin; and the honest earnings of the husband become speedily insufficient for the family expenses, and he is sorely tempted to provide for them by rash speculation or by fraud, which, though it may be carried on for a while without detection, is sure to end in disgrace and ruin at last.

Hence, many young men refuse to marry. They say they cannot afford to support a wife. It is too expensive, and the gain amounts to nothing. Now, any young man who can support himself can support a wife; that is, if he is wise enough to select the right sort of a person.

Second. The young lady, to be the right sort of a person, must have a natural affection for him who wishes to marry her. True love ought to inspire and sanction marriage. We know that in the gay world sincerity in love is as much out of fashion as sweet snuff—nobody takes it now. Therefore, marry not, where natural love does not exist. The grace of the sacrament purifies, ennobles, and preserves the natural love which the husband and wife bear to each other on the day of their marriage. But, if such a natural love has never existed, the marriage is but a chain of iron that every day eats deeper and deeper into the soul. Oh, how many crimes and how much misery spring from such loveless and unhappy marriages! How terrible is the crime of those unnatural parents who sell their children, body and soul, to those whom they can never love! Should your parents, then, try to force you to marry one who has no affection for you, you are not obliged to obey them. You must rather obey God who tells you plainly that that person cannot be the one destined for you, since she has no affection whatever for you. This affection, however, must not be based on wealth or beauty alone, as these gifts soon fade and pass away. True affection is based on virtue, on the gifts of the soul. Mere animal affection soon dies away. Impure love often turns to deadly hatred. The love that comes from God is alone immortal.

Third. There must be, as far as possible, a similarity of age in those that marry. Experience teaches that, when a young man marries an old woman, or when a young woman marries an old man, such marriages are seldom happy. They are too often a cloak for sin—the source of innumerable crimes. It is usually the demons of avarice and impurity that lead such ill-matched couples to the altar; and when spring is wedded to winter, the days are usually disagreeable and stormy.

As a young man should not be rash in making a promise of marriage, so a young woman should not be hasty in binding herself by such a promise. There is before her a young man who seeks her in marriage. He is honest and industrious. He is never seen walking about in the streets at a late hour of the night. He goes regularly to Mass and to the sacraments. He is always respectful to his parents, and affectionate to his brothers and sisters. He is free from bad habits, and especially from the disgraceful vice of drunkenness. He is master of a trade. A trade is a kind of a capital that defies the storm of financial reverse, and that clings to a man when all else has been swept away. It consoles him in the hour of adversity with the assurance that, let whatever may befall him, he need have no fear for the support of himself and his family. It is a "friend in need;" it is independence and wealth —a legacy which is more valuable than gold. The qualities of that young man are such as will make a wife and children happy as long as he lives.

But what young woman of sense would think of marrying a young man who is not satisfied to live comfortably, but must live luxuriously? He must smoke the best cigars, drink the choicest wines, wear the most fashionable clothes; he must belong to a club, play billiards, go to the opera; he must drive to the Park, when he can ride in the city cars; he must spend his holiday at Saratoga or Long Branch; in short, he must live as extravagantly as the idle sons of rich men with whom he associates. To do this, he must necessarily live beyond his means.

Such a young man does not care about his duties to God, to his neighbor, and to himself. He is very apt to make a long marriage-engagement. But let a young woman beware of the man who seeks to bind her to a long engagement. He is generally too poor to marry—that is commonly the excuse; and he makes a great parade of his magnanimity in loving the young girl too well to be willing to bind her down to a lifelong toil and drudgery—and all that sort of thing which sounds so fine, when, in fact, he is too lazy to be willing to work for her, and would rather spend his income in drink, and so on, than in providing for a family. No matter what his pretext may be, his motive is almost always a selfish one. He is either too lazy to work for a family, and too fond of his bachelor indulgences to be willing to renounce them for the purer and calmer joys of married life; or he is a base scoundrel, seeking only to win her affections and her confidence by the fraud of a promise which he never intends to make good. Therefore shun, as a leper, the man who believes in a long engagement, that is, in an engagement which is to run beyond a year.

13. Why are the banns published in the Church?

In order that any one knowing of an impediment to the marriage should make it known to the priest.

Banns is a German word, which means proclamation. The Church has commanded that, during Mass, on three successive Sundays, the banns of an intended marriage should be published. Hence, no marriage can take place until the banns have been published. The object of the publication of the banns is to discover if there be any lawful impediment to the marriage; to know if any of the parties be otherwise engaged by promise or from any other cause, and to afford parents, and all others interested in justly opposing a marriage, an opportunity of interposing and making objections if they have any.

There are certain parents, who are often too anxious to have their daughter "married off their hands;" and the foolish girl herself is only too eager to "catch a husband." What is the consequence? Soon after marriage, they find out that this nice young man is an unprincipled villain, who has a wife and children elsewhere; and that girl, who, perhaps, has sold herself, finds that she is a mother without having the honor of being a wife. It is true that she is free to marry again; but where to find a young man for that purpose? To avoid all this shame and scandal, the holy Church has laid down a positive law, which binds us in conscience (and not merely binding on the purse, as some ignorant and wicked persons imagine), and which strictly requires that the banns of marriage shall be proclaimed in every case.

Only the most urgent reasons can excuse one from this law. Some say that they are ashamed if they are called. They should, however, be rather ashamed if they are not. To object to the publication of the banns is generally looked upon as a sign that there is something wrong, and that the parties are afraid of being found out. When persons are married without the publication of the banns, to say the least, it looks very suspicious. Others object to the publication of the banns on account of being talked of. But there is really a great deal more reason for people to talk if they are not called than if they are. The banns are appointed by the Church that people may know of your marriage, and that, if there is any real objection, it may come out before it can make any trouble. If you try to avoid their publication, it looks as if there were some such objection. There is no disgrace in being married, and it is very silly to act as if there were.

14. What is meant by an impediment to marriage?

1, *A circumstance which, on account of the law of nature or of the Church, prohibits parties from contracting marriage validly, as for instance: near relationship; a solemn vow of chastity, etc.;* 2, *a circumstance which, on account of the law of the Church, prohibits parties from contracting marriage lawfully, as for instance: the forbidden times, the simple private vow of chastity, a promise of marriage to another person, mixed marriage.*

We have already seen that the matter of the sacrament of matrimony is the contract. Hence, where there is no contract, there can be no sacrament. Now, in the same manner, as the state has the power of making persons incapable of contracting certain civil obligations, or as it considers null and void, contracts in which the necessary formalities have not been observed; so the Church has power to declare that certain persons are incapable of entering into the contract of marriage, or that the contract is null and void, unless certain prescribed conditions are fulfilled. The Church has this power from Christ, who, by raising matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, placed it, like all other sacraments, under her authority and jurisdiction. Now, in order to promote morality, and to make the matrimonial alliance free, well sorted, prosperous, and fruitful, the Church has established two kinds of impediments or hindrances to the contract of marriage: the one renders the contract unlawful, the other annuls it. An impediment which renders the marriage contract unlawful, is called a *forbidding* impediment; and an impediment which renders the marriage contract null and void, is called an *annulling* impediment. They who marry, and know, at the same time, that their marriage is forbidden by the Church, receive the sacrament validly, that is to say, they are really married; but they commit a grievous sin. But, if they attempt marriage in spite of an *annulling* impediment,—that is, in spite of an impediment which makes the contract void, no matter whether they are aware of its existence or not,—they are not really married in the sight of God and of his Church. If they knew of such an impediment, and yet persisted in attempting marriage, they committed a grievous sin. If they acted in good faith,—that is, if they had no idea of the existence of the impediment,—the marriage is still null and void; but their ignorance excuses them from sin, and both parties are bound to separate as soon as they come to know of the impediment. Sometimes, it is true, the impediment may be removed by the Church; but, in that case, they must live like brothers and sisters until the dispensation has been obtained, and a valid marriage has been contracted.

The impediments rendering the marriage contract null and void are:—

1. "Consanguinity." The Church declares null and void the contract of marriage between persons who are related to one another by blood within the fourth degree. To understand this well, it is necessary to know that brothers and sisters are said to be related by blood in the first degree. The children of brothers or sisters, that is, first cousins, are related in the second degree. Their children, again, or second cousins, are related to one another in the third degree. Third cousins, therefore, will be related in the fourth degree. Hence, where any relationship exists not more distant than that of third cousins, the contract of marriage between such persons is null and void.

This impediment exists also when the relationship arises from an illegitimate birth.

2. The Church also declares null and void the contract of marriage between those who are related by *affinity*.

The impediment of affinity is contracted, 1, by marriage; 2, by criminal communication; 3, by the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

The impediment of affinity contracted by marriage will be easily understood, if we remember that, by marriage, man and wife are made one flesh. (Matt. xix, 6.) All who are related by blood to the husband are related in the same degree, by affinity, to the wife; and, for the same reason, all who are related by blood to the wife are related in the same degree, by affinity, to the husband. Hence, the meaning of the law of the Church is, that, if the first husband were to die, his wife could not marry any of his relatives within the fourth degree; and, on the same principle, if the husband were the survivor, he could not marry any one related by blood within the fourth degree to his former wife. When the apostle St. Paul excommunicated the incestuous Corinthian who had married his father's widow, he declared the impediment of *affinity*.

The impediment of affinity, contracted by criminal communication, will also be easily understood, if we remember that such a carnal communication naturally occasions a relationship. This impediment, however, extends only to the second degree in regard to those who are relatives of either of the criminal parties.

Affinity, contracted by the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, has always been considered by the Church as a sort of spiritual relationship. For this reason, parents cannot marry with the sponsors of the child, or with any person who baptized it; nor can sponsors marry with their godchildren. So, if one baptizes the child of another, even although it were in case of necessity, he or she cannot afterward marry either with the child or its parents.

The reasons inducing the Church to establish the impediment of affinity and of legal, spiritual, and natural relationship, are easily perceived. Relatives and connections live together from their early age. What fearful disorders would arise from this unavoidable intercourse, if these might be consecrated at some future day by a legitimate marriage! Besides, it is written: "A man shall leave his father and his mother," that is, his relatives, to find a wife elsewhere; and the experience of all ages has shown that the fruitfulness of marriage, the purity and beauty of the blood, require that the wife should really be sought at a distance. There are hereditary vices and diseases of the constitution which are aggravated when members of the same family intermarry, and are most frequently neutralized when the husband and wife belong to families entirely unconnected with each other. Finally, the coming of husband and wife from families altogether unconnected with each other produces a greater spreading of different families, a wider distribution of fortunes, properties, etc.

3. "Clandestine marriages,"—that is, those which are contracted without the presence of the parish priest and two witnesses,—are made null and void by the Council of Trent. In the United States where the decree of the council has not been published, clandestine marriages, although sinful, are valid. As the decree of the Council of Trent has been published in New Orleans, St. Louis, and Detroit, clandestine or private marriages are invalid, or null and void, in those places.

For many years a great many serious difficulties had arisen, in Rhenish Prussia, on the subject of mixed marriages. The Holy See, in its wisdom, eventually decreed that, in those dioceses where the decree of the Council of Trent had been published, and where the Protestant religion had been established by law, a mixed marriage, if contracted before a Protestant minister, or a civil magistrate who may testify to the validity of the contract, should be considered a valid marriage. In making that concession, the pope by no means recognized the Protestant minister as invested with any religious character or authority, but dispensed merely with regard to such marriages in the law of clandestinity. A clandestine marriage presupposes want of reflection, prudent or real grounds for concealment. It opens the door to a multitude of abuses. Commonly, no safe record is kept of the date and of the names of the parties; and when proof of the marriage is required, sufficient proof is not to be found. Thus, wives or husbands may be deserted with impunity, title to property cannot be proved, children are often unable to show their legitimacy. The violation of this marriage law of the Church involves, indeed, the most unhappy consequences. Nothing, then, can be more just than this law.

4. "The bond of a previous marriage" is an impediment which death alone can remove. When our Lord declared that a man is guilty of adultery who marries a woman divorced or put away by her husband, he established the conjugal tie. No power on earth, no prince, no judge, no legislature, can break the bond which unites husband and wife. If therefore, after a divorce is granted by the law of the land, either party should marry another person, such a marriage would be no true marriage before God, but adultery.

5. "Public honesty." By this impediment is understood that, for instance, an affianced bride,—if the matter be broken off again either by death, or by a solemn vow of chastity, or by the mutual consent of the parties, or by a marriage with another new party,—cannot marry the father or brother of the man to whom she was affianced; and if she does, the marriage is null and void. The same is, of course, the case in regard to the male party of the affiance. This impediment has always been considered by the Church as a protection to honor and public decency.

6. "Crime" is sometimes an impediment. Persons who are guilty of adultery, with a mutual promise of marriage, in

case the wronged husband or wife should die, are rendered incapable of contracting marriage together. Two persons who are guilty of the homicide of one of the married parties, and of adultery, with the view to marriage, cannot marry each other. The Church has established the impediment of crime, in order to prevent married people from even thinking of inflicting any injury on each other, with a view to future marriage with another; and to render conjugal fidelity as perfect as possible by the removal of every temptation.

7. "Difference of religion" is an obstacle to an intimate union of hearts of the allied persons, and to the religious education of children. It is, therefore, an annulling impediment between a baptized person and one who is not baptized.

8. "Holy orders and a solemn vow," taken by becoming a religious in an approved religious order, are annulling impediments, in order that the priest and the religious, having lost all hope of ever contracting a valid marriage, may persevere in their holy vocation, and not go and defile another holy state by shameful sacrileges.

9. "Error." By the impediment of error is meant that the marriage is null and void, if there is an error as to the person espoused. For instance: Peter intends to marry Mary; he is deceived by having Catharine put in Mary's place; he gives his consent to Catharine, believing her to be Mary. In such a case, his marriage with Catharine is null and void. The consent, which is the essence of marriage, has here not the object consented to, but another; and therefore the contract is null and void. Errors, however, which regard the qualities, not the person, do not affect the reality of the consent. For instance: Peter believes he is marrying in Mary a rich, noble, wise person;

but after marriage he finds quite the contrary. In such a case, the marriage is valid.

10. "Condition." By the impediment of condition is meant that, if a person marries one who is a slave, believing that one to be free, the marriage is null and void; because a slave is completely under the control of his or her master, and therefore cannot be at the disposal of another. However, if one marries a slave and is, at the same time, aware of that state of slavery, the marriage is valid, because the consent is here accompanied by knowledge and deliberation, and no deceit or wrong is committed.

11. "Violence." By the impediment of violence is understood that the marriage is null and void if the consent of either party is not a free consent, but a consent extorted by any considerable unjust violence. This impediment has been established, in order that the rich and powerful may not presume to use violence in this matter to the poor; and because violence is directly opposed to that free consent which is the essence of marriage.

12. "Impotence." By the impediment of impotence is meant that, if the party or parties are in a state which permanently disqualifies either or both for the principal end of marriage, the marriage is null and void. However, if this disqualification is not permanent, or, if permanent, has supervened after marriage, the marriage is good and valid.

13. "Rape." By the impediment of rape is meant that, to carry one off against her own will, or against the will of the parents or guardians, renders marriage with such a person null and void, until she is again set at liberty, and ready to give her free consent.

The forbidding impediments which render marriages unlawful, though they are valid, are:—

1. A promise of marriage to another person, whilst that promise is still existing.

2. A simple vow of chastity.

3. If a Catholic should marry a heretic or a person excommunicated by the Church. This prohibition is founded on the gravest reasons, of which we shall speak a little further on.

4. Solemnizing the marriage in Advent or Lent. Marriage is a season of joy. Our Lord himself compares heaven to a wedding-feast. Hence, marriage ought not, without a grave cause, to take place when the Church is fasting and mourning. What would you think of a young girl who would choose for her wedding-day the day of her father's death? Would you not say she was unnatural and heartless? Would not her conduct shock every refined feeling, every noble sentiment of the heart? And what are we to think of those Catholics who choose the time of Advent or Lent, when the Church, their mother, is mourning, to celebrate their nuptials? Is not their conduct equally unnatural and heartless? Does it not shock every refined feeling and noble sentiment of our nature? And if, on such occasions, the Church is forced to witness their marriage, she refuses to give them her solemn benediction.

15. Can the impediments to marriage be removed?

The Church can dispense some of them for sufficient reasons: on this subject parties must consult their pastor.

The Church sometimes grants a dispensation in her laws, and then such marriages become lawful. Where, for instance, special reasons exist, dispensations are often given to enable persons to marry who are related either by blood or affinity in the third or the fourth degree; and in exceptional cases, in the second, or even in the first degree, where the relationship is by affinity. But as these laws are grounded on considerations of order, justice, social economy; as they tend to promote the greater good of the family and of the human race, it follows that if, for just reasons, a Christian believes that he ought to ask for a dispensation from any of these laws, the Church cannot grant a dispensation lightly. She must weigh the reasons alleged; if necessary, she must ascertain the truth of them by inquiry, not dispense in an important law, except in view of an equal or greater good, and must in all cases put a salutary restraint on those demands of exemption and privilege which tend to destroy the law.

It is to indemnify the judges for the costs of these inquiries, consultations, writings, etc.; it is to supply, by means of alms, the good work which would have been involved in the observance of the law; it is, lastly, to reduce as much as possible the number of petitioners, and to keep them under the common rule, that persons in opulent or easy circumstances have to pay a sum of money before obtaining a dispensation from an impediment established by ecclesiastical law. There is always one good way of avoiding charges so justly demanded—that of keeping the common rule. The dispensation is granted to the poor at much less expense.

16. What is a mixed marriage?

It is a marriage in which one of the parties is not a Catholic.

Mixed marriages are the union of Catholics with non-Catholics. They are called mixed, on account of the difference of religion between the parties. There is a married couple. The husband is not a Catholic. He either believes not in God and in Jesus Christ, or he believes in such a God and Christ as he fancies. His wife says: "I believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and God; I believe in all that he teaches us through the Catholic Church." She says with Jesus Christ: "Hear the Church." "No," says her husband, "do not hear the Church, protest against her, with all your might."

With Jesus Christ she says: "If any one will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." "No," says her husband, "if any one does not hear the Church, look upon him as a good and free man." With Christ she says: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church." "No," says her husband, "'tis false; the gates of hell have prevailed against the Church more than a thousand years ago." She says: "The pope is the Vicar of Christ." "No," says her husband, "the pope is Antichrist." She believes in the necessity of good works; her husband denies it. She believes in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; her husband denies it. She believes in the indissolubility of marriage; her husband does not. She prays to the Blessed Virgin and the other saints of heaven; her husband declares such a prayer to be an act of idolatry. Nothing can be more detestable and shocking than such a union of a Catholic with a non-Catholic.

In a synodal address published by the hierarchy of Australia, the Right Rev. Prelates speak on the subject of such unions as follows: "The frequency of mixed marriages is a terrible blot upon the character of our Catholic community. It is sad to think with what facility Catholic parents consent to such irreligious connections, and with how little caution they expose their young people to social intercourse, where passionate fancy and the thoughtlessness of youth are certain to entail the danger of mischievous alliances. It is in the main the fault of the parents more than of the children, who hear so little warning against mixed marriages—so little denunciation and deprecation of their dangers and miseries. If young people did hear from the clergy and from parents, as often and as explicitly as they ought, the sense and doctrine of the Church concerning such marriages, these unholy unions would be a far rarer calamity than they are. The generosity of the young would revolt from such unions, if they saw them in their true light, as a danger and as a disgrace."

Indeed, experience shows that those pastors who are zealous in teaching the faithful the dangers of these marriages, and firm in warning all persons to be prudent in the control of their passions, have but seldom to apply for a dispensation, and, when they apply for one, it is based upon the strongest reasons.

This deficiency of instruction arises, in part, from a certain fear of wounding those who have already contracted mixed marriages. No doubt, it is a subject that demands the use of prudent, grave, and measured language. However, where the salvation of souls is at stake, the Church knows neither silence nor false delicacy.

There is a license for the poet, a license for the stage, a license for the bar, a license for the writer of fiction, a license for the press; and why should there not be a license for a Christian writer and speaker, for a true minister of Christ? It is high time for true modesty and delicacy to take the place of false modesty and delicacy, to which the alarming increase of mixed marriages is greatly to be attributed.

Our youth must be taught, in catechism, the law of the Church forbidding mixed marriages. If they are taught properly, they will be prepared to hear it enlarged upon from the pulpit. If the prohibition of mixed marriages, and the reasons of such a prohibition, are made known to them before their passionate fancy is developed, they will have the Catholic sense and instinct within them to guard and withhold them before they allow themselves to be entangled in engagements. If parents are taught to reflect on the dangers inherent to these marriages, on the real religious disadvantages which attend even the best of them; if they are taught the great horror in which the Church holds these marriages, they will be more careful in keeping their children from the immediate occasion of them, and will be less disposed to encourage them.

17. Why does the Church disapprove of mixed marriages?

1. *Because the Catholic party is exposed to the danger of losing the faith, or of becoming indifferent to it;* 2, *because the Catholic education of the children is generally neglected, and often made impossible;* 3, *because the non-Catholic party does not believe in the indissolubility of the bonds of marriage.*

In an instruction addressed by the Holy See, in the year 1858, to all the archbishops and bishops of the Church, it is explicitly taught that "the Church has always reprobated mixed marriages, and has held them to be unlawful and pernicious, as well on account of the disgraceful communion in divine things, as on account of the danger of perversion that hangs over the Catholic party to the marriage, and of the disastrous influences affecting the education of children."

Hard and stern as the law of the Church forbidding mixed marriages may seem to the lax and indifferent, or even to the better-disposed Catholics who have never earnestly thought the subject through, it has, in fact, been in force in all ages. When God, through Moses, gave his divine law to his chosen people, stern and uncompromising was the prohibition against their mingling in marriage with the children of unbelief: "Thou shalt not," said he, "make marriages with them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son."

If we turn to the law of Christ and his Church, we shall find that St. Paul lays down a rule for married converts from paganism, which clearly shows it was never intended that Christians should marry unbelievers. The apostle tells the Corinthians: "If any faithful woman hath an unbelieving husband, and he assent to dwell with her, let her not put him away." "He is not speaking of those who are not yet married," as St. John Chrysostom explains, "but of those who are already married. He does not say: If any one wishes to take an unbeliever, but, If any one has an unbeliever; that is: If any one has received faith and the consort remains in unbelief, and consents to live with the other party, let no separation be made." "But," says the apostle, "if the unbeliever depart, let him depart; for a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God hath called us in peace. For how knowest thou, O woman, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" The apostle intimates that, if the unbeliever refuses to live in peace with the converted believer, or wantonly deserts her, the marriage bond is dissolved. Hence, the law of the Church leaves the Christian free in such a case to contract a Christian marriage. But this is limited to the case of an unbeliever who is unbaptized. St. John

Chrysostom says, in explanation of St. Paul's words: "If he orders you to sacrifice to his idols, or to join him in impious acts in your marriage, or to depart from him, it is better the marriage be dissolved than that piety should suffer." But the whole instruction of the apostle implies, if it does not expressly state, that a marriage between a Christian who is free, and an unbaptized pagan or an unbeliever, cannot be thought of. Hence, such marriages, although they are not positively forbidden by any natural or divine law, have always been forbidden and treated as invalid by the Church, from the earliest to the latest of her laws.

Again, the apostles prohibited all social intercourse with heretics. In his second Epistle, St. John says: "If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, nor say to him, God speed you. For, he that sayeth to him, God speed you, communicateth with his wicked work." Now, if the apostle forbids the faithful to receive heretics into their houses or to greet them on the way, how can they be allowed to marry them? St. Paul gives the same rule to Titus: "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition avoid." And to the Corinthians, he says of one whose husband is dead: "She is at liberty: let her marry whom she will, only in the Lord." But to marry in the Lord is to marry in the Church, and to be united to a member of Christ; and so the fathers interpret the passage. Tertullian says that, when the apostle says, "'Let her marry only in the Lord,' he is no longer advising, but strictly commanding; so that, in an affair of this greatest importance, unless we obey, we perish." (Ad Uxor., l. ii, c. 1.)

In the year 313, the Council of Eliberis, in its sixteenth canon, decrees: "If heretics will not enter the Catholic Church, the daughters of Catholics must not be given to them in marriage. They are not to be given to Jews or to heretics, because there can be no society of believers and unbelievers. If parents act against this decree, let them abstain from communion for five years." (Harduin's *Concilia*, vol. i, col. 252.)

In 372, the Council of Laodicea decreed, in its tenth chapter, that "those who belong to the Church ought by no means to ally their children indifferently with heretics in matrimony." (Ibid., col. 783.)

In the year 451, the General Council of Chalcedon, in its fifteenth action, fourteenth canon, decreed: "Neither ought one, who is marriageable, to contract marriage with a heretic, a Jew, or a pagan, unless such a one promise to join the orthodox faith; so that an orthodox person may be united with one who is orthodox. If any one shall transgress this definition of the holy synod, he shall be subject to the canonical correction."

The law forbidding mixed marriages continued to be reënacted in the middle-ages; and in the year 1309, the Council of Posen, presided over by a papal legate, and confirmed by Pope Clement VI, in 1346, decrees as follows: "That the Catholic faith, which spurns the rending spirit of any error whatsoever, may not be stained with the leaven of any schism or heretical depravity, with the counsel and consent of this present council, we, by a perpetual edict, prohibit that any one subject to our legislation, who desires to be held and accounted a Catholic, shall presume to give his daughter, niece, or other relative, in marriage to a heretic, to a Patarene, to a Garane, to a schismatic, or to any other person who is opposed to the Christian faith, so long as they remain in errors." (Harduin's *Concilia*, vol. vii, col. 1300.)

In the year 1583, the Council of Bordeaux, approved by Pope Gregory XIII, in its fifteenth title on matrimony, decrees as follows: "Let the faithful Catholics be frequently admonished by their parish priests that they give not their sons and daughters in marriage to heretics, or to men who are aliens from the Catholic faith and religion." (Ibid., vol. x, col. 1351.)

Let us now turn to the doctrine and disciplinary decisions of the Holy See, which has ever held one uniform language on this subject. Especially have the popes peremptorily declared against mixed marriages since the rise and spread of Protestantism. And although, in his treatise on Diocesan Synods, the illustrious Benedict XIV has vindicated the right and authority of the Holy See to grant dispensations for very grave reasons, and to prevent worse evils, yet, in his Constitution addressed to the bishops of Poland, the great Pontiff affirms "the antiquity of that discipline with which the Holy See has ever reprobated the marriage of Catholics with heretics." He quotes a letter of Clement XI, in which, replying to a petition for dispensation for a mixed marriage, the pope says: "We hold it of greater importance not to ever pass the rules of God's Church, of the Apostolic See, of our predecessors, and of the canons, unless the good of the whole Christian republic require it." And in another letter Pope Clement says: "The Church, in truth, abhors these marriages, which exhibit much deformity in them, and but little spirituality."

Benedict XIV, in a decree referring to Holland and Belgium, declares his "extreme grief that Catholics can be found, who, disgracefully deluded by an unhealthy affection, neither abhor these hateful marriages nor abstain from them, even although the Catholic Church has always condemned and forbidden them;" and he "greatly commends those prelates who strive, even with severe penalties, to restrain Catholics from joining themselves in this sacrilegious bond with heretics." He seriously exhorts and warns all bishops, vicars-apostolic, parish priests and missioners in Holland and Belgium, "to do their utmost to deter and hinder Catholics from entering into this kind of marriage." And where a mixed marriage has already been contracted, "the Catholic party, whether husband or wife, is to be sedulously brought to repentance for the grievous sin committed, and to ask pardon of God, and to make all possible endeavors to bring the party erring from the faith into the bosom of the Church: which endeavors will contribute greatly toward obtaining pardon for the sin committed."

In 1858, Pope Pius IX issued the instruction on dispensing in mixed marriages, and addressed it to all archbishops and bishops, in which he exhorts them "to keep the holy teaching of the Catholic Church respecting these marriages most religiously and in all its inviolable integrity:" With "the ardent zeal of their pastoral office must they turn away the Catholics intrusted to them from these mixed marriages, and exactly teach them the doctrine of the Catholic Church and her laws as affecting these marriages."

1. *Mixed marriages are unlawful and pernicious on account of the disgraceful communion in divine things.*

Mixed marriages are, indeed, a disgrace, not, perhaps, always in the eyes of the world, but always in the sight of the Church. How are they to be interpreted? On one side, there is the Church teaching that matrimony is a sacrament; that the married life has its own great duties, its own difficulties, for which special graces of God are necessary, and which are granted by him; that the married state is to be entered upon, thoughtfully and solemnly, with careful preparation of mind and heart; that spouses are to be of mutual help and encouragement in the grand end of all human life, the life for God and the next world. This is on one side; and on the other, what is there? A mere fanciful or passionate attachment, with little enough of worth about it, even when pure with the utmost natural purity it can have,—a mere passionate attachment, overlooking, or at least most certainly undervaluing, the great considerations just stated. Is not this a disgrace?

Or, if the motive to mixed marriages be an advantageous alliance in respect of money, is it not even more disgraceful to soil a sacred thing with the sordid calculations of a commercial bargain?

Or, if the mixed marriage be coveted because one of the parties possesses some little higher worldly standing of fashion, or connection, or style,—why, is not the thing still more contemptibly disgraceful, at least for the Catholic, with the belief about the one Church, the holiness of the sacraments, the preciousness of God's grace, and the true end of life?

St. Ambrose calls the marriage of a Catholic with one who is not a Catholic, *sacrilegious*, and Benedict XIV, and other popes after him, have judicially applied to it the same awful term. Sacrilege is a violation offered to something sacred in that in which it is sacred. Now, Christian marriage is, in the first place, a communion in sacred things. But, as St. Paul teaches, there can be no communion between light and darkness; that is, there can be no religious communion between one who has the faith, and one who has not the faith. They cannot communicate in faith, in worship, or in the sacraments. And for one without faith to communicate in a sacrament is a sacrilege, because it is the violation of a most sacred thing. Yet marriage in the Catholic Church involves the sacramental communion.

Secondly, the parties to the marriage are the dispensers of this great mystery, and, in a mixed marriage, one of the parties ministers in that solemn act of religion, having no Catholic faith in the sacrament.

Thirdly, the Catholic marriage is a communion in the grace of Christ, and in the benediction of the Church ; and, therefore, the parties prepare themselves by purifying their hearts in the sacrament of penance, and partake together of the body of Christ. But in a mixed marriage, although the baptism of the heretical person secures the validity of the marriage, and although, to prevent worse evils, the Church may very reluctantly grant such a dispensation as to prevent the unlawfulness of the marriage, yet she withholds her blessing and forbids the holy sacrifice, and mourns over a union which is neither a communion in faith nor in grace.

We have seen how a Catholic marriage represents and signifies the nuptial union between Christ and his Church, the profound meaning of which sacramentally affects the spiritual relations of the married pair in Christ, and gives them great responsibilities in common as members of the Church. But how can the union between a member of the Church and one who is not one of her members express the union between Christ and the Church? And how can they fulfil united duties toward the Church? For such grave reasons as these, has the Church not hesitated to call mixed marriages *sacrilegious*, *unlawful*, and *pernicious*.

One of the touching reasons which God gave to the Israelites not to be married to idolaters was: "Because thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be his peculiar people of all peoples that are upon the earth. Not because you surpass all nations in number, is the Lord joined to you, and hath chosen you, for you are the fewest of any people; but because the Lord hath loved you, and hath kept the oath which he swore to your fathers, and hath brought you out with a strong hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage." Can a Catholic have realized what it is to have the high and noble privilege of being one of God's chosen people, of being a child of Christ's Church, a member of the household of faith,—and yet prefer to become one flesh, and to live in one spirit, with an alien from God's Church, rather than with one of God's chosen people?

When St. Frances de Chantal was urged by her parents to marry a Protestant, she most emphatically refused their request and said: "I would rather live forever in a prison than in the house of a Protestant; and I would die a thousand times rather than marry an enemy of the Church." (Her Life, by Bougand.)

2. *Mixed marriages are also unlawful and pernicious, because the Catholic party is exposed to great danger of either losing the faith, or of becoming indifferent to it.*

There was a time when to marry a heretic furnished legal suspicion of either an inclination to heresy, or to foster heresy. The civil law defined marriage to be a perpetual life in common between the contracting parties, and a mutual communication of divine and human rights; and it was argued that, for "a Catholic to enter of free choice into a life-long union of so intimate a nature with a heretic, furnished a grave presumption of sympathy with heresy." (Pitra, in Cons. Apost., vol. iv; Constit. Joannis xxii, nn. 4, 5.) If, in the beginning of marriage, the Catholic party does not as yet sympathize with heresy, he or she will soon be in danger of not only sympathizing with it, but of even falling entirely away from the faith.

In the sixth chapter of Genesis, it is shown how large a share mixed marriages had in bringing about that universal corruption which made God say that he "repented of having made man." For the sons of God, that is, the sons of Seth, the true believers on earth, married the daughters of unbelief from sensual motives, "because they were fair." Holy Scripture points to these unions as to the original cause of that universal corruption, in remedy of which God sent the purging deluge.

When the generations after the deluge had sunk anew into corruption, and idolatry had stifled faith and the true worship of God, the Lord chose the patriarchs to worship him in faith; and that their faith might be preserved in their descendants, he inspired them to shun the daughters of the unbelieving races around them, and to seek their wives even from a distance—from the more religious race of which they were descended.

When Almighty God led the Israelites into the Promised Land, he strictly forbade them to give their sons and daughters in marriage to the idolatrous people of the land; for, said he, "she" (the idolatrous woman) "will turn away thy son from following us, that he may rather serve strange gods, and the wrath of the Lord will be enkindled and will quickly destroy thee."

Indeed, the whole drift and provision of God's law were directed toward preserving the faithful from alliance with the populations that were devoid of faith; and the whole history of that people from the time of Solomon, and after his sad example, goes to show that mixed marriages in defiance of God's law, and despite of the warnings of the prophets, were amongst the chief causes of the infidelities, impieties, and sacrileges that forfeited for God's people the divine protection, introduced heathen worship into the very palaces of their kings and to the gates of their temple, and brought unutterable calamities on the people. It is impossible to read the Old Testament with attention, without seeing that the divine prohibition of marriage between believers and unbelievers was a most benign and merciful dispensation, and that the neglect of this prohibition was ever attended with evils of the gravest kind.

Hence, the councils, the fathers and Pontiffs of all times, proclaim the experience that these marriages are injurious to faith, and often cause the loss of it, both to the Catholic parent and the children. The above-quoted Council of Posen says: "We have learned from experience that men who, through the devil's instigation, are separated from the Catholic faith, draw their wives, however Catholic, to the error of unbelief, instead of their wives drawing them:" "By such marriages," says the Council of Bordeaux, quoted above, "very many have made shipwreck of the faith." St. Augustine reproves the marriages of Catholics with schismatics, in these words: "Those miserable people, believing in Christ, have their food at home in common, but the table of Christ they cannot have in common. Must we not weep when we so often see how the husband and wife vow to each other in Christ to have their bodies faithfully united in one, whilst they rend the body of Christ by being attached to different communions?

Great is the scandal, great the devil's triumph, great the ruin of souls!" (Epist. 23 to Maximinus, Donatist Bp.)

There is, as a general rule, greater danger in the marriage of a Catholic with a heretic, than in the marriage of a Catholic with a heathen. A Catholic must naturally hold marriage with a heathen in greater abhorrence than marriage with a baptized person. And if, in an evil hour, such a marriage were contracted, the dread of heathen influence would be far greater, and the desire and solicitude for that heathen's conversion far more earnest. But a daily familiarity with heresy removes half the dread of it; and weak Catholics, who are ill instructed, are apt to lose sight of the immeasurable distance between faith and heretical opinion, between the security of the Church and absence of all safety outside the Church. And where the non-Catholic party to the marriage possesses kindly and attractive qualities, either by nature or from culture; or where the character of the non-Catholic party is the stronger of the two, and where the Catholic is drawn away from Catholic influences and associations, and brought under the anti-Catholic influences of those with whom the non-Catholic consort habitually associates, it must, of necessity, require an extraordinary and special gift of grace for that Catholic to hold to the faith and its duties. Experience shows that many who are placed in such circumstances fall away from the faith, and too often carry distressed and tortured consciences to the end of their lives.

To a true Catholic, indeed, religion is the first of all things—the very law of life. The house of a Catholic should be a Catholic house. It should be pervaded with a certain religious tone, and more especially so in the private apartments of the family. As the house contains a family of God's children, it should be under the benediction of God. There should be nothing in it to offend the Christian sense, to awake temptation or to cause disedification. The crucifix should be found in the place where the family-prayer is performed, and devout pictures should speak of God and heaven from the walls.

In a mixed marriage, the house is not Catholic; the family is not Catholic; the atmosphere is not Catholic; the symbols of faith are not visible. The souls of husband and wife are locked up from each other; they have no communion of thought or feeling in the chief concern of life. Think what it is to be never able to speak or act together in what concerns God, the soul, the Church, or the life to come! Think what it is to have no joint counsel or community of feeling in what concerns the spiritual welfare of a family! Think what it is to have one's faith shut up in the breast, there to pine and faint for want of full and open exercise in the household and in the family duties!

How often are the visible tokens of religion removed, to avoid offence, whilst the faith is kept hidden from sight, like some dangerous secret! Where are the family prayers? Where is the communion in the sacraments? Happy is the Catholic wife when she is not thwarted in her way to the Church. How often must she stay at home, when she would gladly seek some consolation there, until her devotion grows feeble for want of exercise! Happy is she when her faith and her Church are left unassailed, and when she is not teased with sectarian importunities by her husband, or by his relatives and friends. Perhaps (for this often happens), she is much isolated from her Catholic friends, and from those who, in the hour of need, could give her support. Happy is she, then, if at last she does not sacrifice her inward conscience to human respect and to a shallow exterior tranquillity. She has chosen the peril, and blessed is she if she is saved by a miracle of grace. Yet she has no right to expect such a miracle.

Happy is the Catholic husband whose sectarian wife neither oppresses his weaker religious will by her zeal, nor undermines his faith by the more subtle influences which she can bring to bear upon him. Even if faith is held to, peace will go. Holy Scripture says : " Where one buildeth up and another pulleth down, what profit have they but the labor? Where one prayeth and another curseth, which voice will God hear?"

Undoubtedly, there are exceptional cases, where the marriage proceeds happily; and that, not merely in the complete fulfilment of all the pledges given, but even in the conversion of the non-Catholic party. Still the overwhelming majority of examples stands on the opposite side; and who shall venture to foretell that this or that marriage will turn out happily for the faith, and not for its destruction? Even in those exceptional cases where the marriage proves happy in the final result, we must guard against letting them blind us to the fact that, in far the greatest number of cases, such marriages end unhappily.

3. *Mixed marriages have always been reprobated by the Church, because the Catholic education of the children is generally neglected, and often made impossible.*

It is the sublime office of the married pair to present their children to Christ, and with united solicitude to guide them on the path of faith and charity. But how are their united strength, authority, and devout influence to accomplish this important duty as God wishes, when one parent contends for the faith and the other contends against it?

How can they fulfil this duty when, as it often happens, all promises and pledges are broken, and the children are refused either a Catholic baptism or a Catholic education? How can either a Catholic man or a Catholic woman contract a marriage with a safe conscience, where, granting the influence to be equal on both sides, the parent without faith must neutralize the influence over the children of the Catholic parent?

The contest not infrequently begins when there is question of baptizing the first child. The non-Catholic father will have the boys baptized and brought up in his way. The non-Catholic mother will have the girls to follow her way. And to the eyes of the world, there is a semblance of equity in this arrangement; but the world cannot take into consideration the conscience of the Catholic, secured before the marriage, the obligation contracted by the sacrament of matrimony, and the free pledges that have been made on the other side as essential conditions to the contract.

Sometimes, again, the non-Catholic father is for leaving the children free, without being taught any specific creed, until, as he says, they are able to judge for themselves; and on this ground the Catholic mother is restrained from teaching them their religion. It also happens very frequently that the non-Catholic father declares that no child of his shall ever enter a Catholic church, or be taught the Catholic catechism or prayers. Sometimes, wearied with the contest, the weak mother will at last exclaim, like the woman before Solomon's judgment-seat who was not the true mother: "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but let it be divided." And as there is no Solomon to settle the point of justice, a compromise is effected, which is followed by coldness toward religion, a neglect of its duties, a weakening of faith, and other such fatal effects which are most hurtful to the soul.

Again, there is the benumbing influence of human respect, so potent over weak souls, and the fear of offending those who may benefit the children in a temporal point of view. Then there are those terrible trials to the child's heart, who, loving both parents equally, finds them opposed to each other in all that concerns God, the soul, and the religious life. To one dear parent, the question of religion as between parent and child is a forbidden topic; and happy is the child when it has not to witness the contest about the guidance of its soul,—a contest that cannot fail to wound parental influence, as well as filial reverence. Ah! what is to be expected from children who hear one thing from one parent, and the contrary from the other—who see that what the one approves, the other condemns—that what the one reverences, the other ridicules? What is to be expected in such circumstances but that the poor children should become cold and indifferent about all religion; or at best,—like those unhappy Israelites who halted between the Lord and Baal,—halt all their days between the Church of Christ and heresy or infidelity, and at last fall under the condemnation of those of whom our Saviour says: "He that is not with me, is against me"? (Luke xi, 23.)

There is a congregation in one of the Middle States which numbers about two hundred families. There are not fewer than fifty-seven mixed marriages in it. The number of converts is but six, and the number of those who gave up the Catholic religion is twenty-two. As to the children, there are at present found fifty-four who are being instructed in the rudiments of our religion, and it is hoped that they will adhere to the practice of her doctrines. But there are one hundred and thirty-seven who are receiving their religious training in some religious sect, or are left to grow up in utter ignorance. There are thirty-one more, whose ultimate end is as yet doubtful. The number of perverted Catholics is nearly four to one in this congregation. There is no reason to believe that mixed marriages are less productive of evil in other congregations.

4. *The non-Catholic party does not believe in the indissolubility of the bonds of marriage.*

There is one reflection, were there no other unpleasant consequences to be anticipated, which should make the Catholic party, before contracting a mixed marriage, pause and consider: "The young man whom I intend to marry to-day, does not believe that the bonds of marriage cannot be dissolved. He may therefore forsake me to-morrow, or at any time he chooses. And while I cannot contract another marriage during his lifetime, I may be forced to endure every privation; perhaps I may even find it necessary to beg a morsel of bread. The consolation of having my children—should God in time bless me with any—by my side may not be granted: I may be forced to confide them to unfriendly hands." On this account M. de Stolberg wrote to a young person whom he was endeavoring to dissuade from contracting a mixed marriage: "Do you know, my child, to what a temptation to apostasy you are about to expose yourself? Are you able to resolve the doubts which will be proposed to you by learned men—perhaps by Protestants still attached to the false doctrines of Luther and Calvin, of whom the number is daily diminishing, or more probably by Protestants, who turn all religion into ridicule, and retain no more of their own than they like: unbelievers, of whom the majority regard Jesus Christ merely as a wise man? Will you never feel any false shame when they see you go to confession,—they who regard confession of sins as an ignominious and insupportable yoke? Will you never be disturbed or shaken by the ideas which your husband entertains regarding the sacred mystery in which the God-man is veiled, and gives himself under the most humble outward appearance to us Catholics? Is it a feeling of satisfaction and tranquillity that you will experience when you reflect that he cannot, by participating in the same sacrament, share with you the blessing whereof our Saviour spoke to St. Thomas: 'Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed'? That you cannot, kneeling together before the holy sacrament, both share in that promise: 'I am with you always to the end of the world;' or rejoice mutually in the proper meaning of the assurance that he will ever remain with the successors of the apostles to preserve his Church from all error? Will it conduce to your tranquillity when your husband is attacked by serious illness, and you see death approaching, without his being able to receive the sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ—penance, the holy eucharist, extreme unction?

"You probably dwell with pleasure on the thought of nursing your little ones, and of seeing a numerous family spring up around you. But, before God intrusts you with these children, your husband will probably tell you that none of his children shall ever be allowed to become a Catholic. Will you be firm enough to oppose him in this point?

"And he who tells you this, does not pledge himself to be your husband forever! His religion authorizes him to forsake you in order to contract ties which Jesus Christ has declared to be adulterous. And this husband, who merely lends himself to you, while you give yourself without reserve to him, is either without religion, and then he leaves you without security for his fidelity; or he is attached to his false worship, and in that case he will soon repent of having married you. But, whether he is indifferent or zealous, he will always try to make you adopt his principles.

"In a word, you will either continue thoughtless, as you are at present—and then what dangers threaten you!—or your eyes will be opened to your real position, and you will be every day more distressed at seeing yourself separated, in what is of the highest importance, from your own children, whom you will have excluded from the Church, the mother of all the faithful, whom you will have sacrificed to what you know to be error, and perhaps to everlasting perdition."

A young woman had a practice of going to the dancing-houses. One evening, in the dancing-house, she made acquaintance with a Protestant young man: they danced and talked with each other. The time passed on, and it was getting late. The Protestant young man asked her if she would marry him. She was silent for a few moments. She remembered very well she had often heard the priest say it is a very bad thing for Catholics to marry Protestants, or those of any other religion—that God does not bless these marriages. No matter; she answered, "Yes"—she promised to marry him. What else could you expect in a dancing-house? The evil spirit of the dancing-house moved her to give that answer. That angel guardian whom God had given her to take charge over her in all her ways (Ps. xc), was not with her. How could he go into a bad dancing-house? So, even if she had thought of saying a short prayer to her good angel before giving that important answer, on which her future happiness or misery depended, he was not there to listen to it. They do not think about these things in dancing-houses. Before the marriage, the young man made many fine promises how she should go to Mass every Sunday, and he would go with her, and the children should be christened by the priest, and brought up Catholics. Very likely, he said, he would become a Catholic himself. This marriage took place—a dancing-house marriage! She was married to the Protestant young man.

It was a bright, sunshiny morning, the morning of the marriage. There were dark clouds not very far off. The Protestant young man behaved pretty well to his wife for a few months. It is true he quarrelled with her sometimes. He forgot his promises, and beat her because she wanted to go to the Catholic church on Sundays. He sometimes threw her prayer-book into the fire, and spoke against the doctrines of the Catholic Church. She was silent and patient. She knew that it was a just punishment from God for marrying a Protestant: "For by what things a man sinneth, by the same also is he punished." (Wisd. xi.) That marriage had been made, and it was too late to unmake it. At last the dark cloud came! The Protestant young man came home one day to his dinner. He sat down to the table and began to eat. The meat was not to his liking. There was sulky anger on his face. He was silent for a few moments. At last he stood up on his feet, holding the knife clenched in his hand, fury and rage flashing from his eyes. He cursed his wife, and said: "You Popish beast, I will stick you with this knife, and take every drop of Popish blood out of you!" The wife turned deadly pale. She fell off the chair. Her senses were gone with the fright.

She got back her senses again, but it was only to live for a day or two. She died of the shock which the fright had given her! And now she lies buried near the wall of a Catholic burial-ground in Lancashire. So ended the dancing-house marriage. So ended the marriage of a Catholic with a Protestant. Those who care about their own happiness will never marry those who are not Catholics: "*Know ye for a certainty that, if you make marriages with them, . . . they shall be a pit and a snare in your way, and a stumbling-block at your side, and stakes in your eyes.*" (Jos. xxiii.—Furniss' Tracts.)

It is only a few years ago that a priest was called to see a dying woman, who had not been to her duties for twenty years. Some of her children were baptized by Protestant ministers, others were not baptized at all. Her husband was a Protestant, who would never allow her to attend to her religious duties, nor to bring up her children in the Catholic religion. He took care that no priest should speak to his wife before her death. Knowing that a Catholic friend of his wife had sent for the priest, he gave her, in the meantime, some medicine, which made her unconscious until she died.

Ah! how happy would it be for many a Catholic, if, instead of going to his nuptials, he had gone to his grave! Then he would have to render an account for only one; now, hundreds may rise up in judgment against him, because he was instrumental in bringing up a generation of heretics or unbelievers. How often do we not hear the phrase: "I am a friend of the Catholics, for my father was once a member of that Church;" or, "My mother ought to be a Catholic"! Expressions like these bear a terrible testimony against the person fallen away from the faith, and tell of a wretched soul bartered to satisfy the cravings of an unholy love.

18. Does the Church permit mixed marriages?

Yes, on condition: 1, *that there is a grave reason for such a marriage;* 2, *that the Catholic party is allowed the free exercise of religion;* 3, *that all the children be brought up in the Catholic religion;* 4, *that the Catholic party will do his best to persuade the non-Catholic to embrace the true faith.*

For a Catholic to form a union so intimate as that of marriage with one who is not a Catholic, has been, at all times and in all places, forbidden by the Church. In this universal law common to the whole Church, no local bishop has authority to dispense. The Vicar of Christ, as visible head of the Church, and he alone, moved by sufficient reasons, can dispense with this ecclesiastical law. Benedict XIV says that it was extremely rare for his predecessors to dispense in mixed marriages, except on condition that heresy was renounced; and even then, only in the case of the marriage of sovereign princes, and to prevent great evils to the commonwealth.

"If any thing of the severity of the canons," says Pius IX, in his instruction on dispensing in mixed marriages, "is relaxed in dispensing by authority of the Holy See in mixed marriages, that can only be done for grave reasons, and with very great reluctance."

According to an instruction of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, in 1868, the precautionary promises exacted of the contracting parties are by no means a warrant of themselves for obtaining a dispensation. Reasons for the dispensations must be assigned that actually arise out of the individual case, and that are "altogether just and grave." For, "the precautionary conditions are exacted by the natural and the divine law, and that for avoiding the intrinsic dangers inherent in mixed marriages; but there must be some grave difficulty impending over the faithful that cannot otherwise be removed, before they can be allowed to expose their faith and morals to grave risks."

These last words sum up the judicial responsibility resting on the person who grants the dispensation. There must be grave risks impending over the faithful that cannot otherwise be removed, to justify the grant of the dispensation. Will it justify any Catholic to make these risks or bring them about, with the view of pleading them as a ground for dispensation? This would be in fraud of the law; and no one has a right to profit by this fraud, or to claim an indulgence or a privilege, whose plea is set up in a fraud. Can there be a greater fraud than for a Catholic to go and engage himself to marry one who is not a Catholic, and then to come and plead the engagement as a ground for dispensation? This is but a cunning way of trying to wrest from the Church both her law and her judgment: it can be followed by no blessing. Where a marriage is canonically unlawful in itself, there can be no espousals, and no engagement binding before the Church, until the legal impediment is removed. No Catholic is justified in contracting such an engagement until a dispensation has been previously obtained. The farthest extent to which the Catholic can go is to have it clearly understood that everything must depend on the condition that a proper dispensation is obtained; and he or she should make no irrevocable engagement until it is obtained.

Now, it is solely in virtue of a special delegation from the Sovereign Pontiff, which is granted for a limited time, or a limited number of cases, and on the conditions he prescribes, that a bishop can dispense in regard to mixed marriages. But the very fact that, in granting these dispensations, a bishop must act, not as an ordinary but as a delegated judge, and in face of the universal law, must necessarily deepen the sense of responsibility. Hence, the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, in 1868, wrote to the bishops of the Catholic Church: "Wherefore we earnestly request of your charity that you strive and put forth your efforts, as far as in the Lord you can, to keep the faithful confided to you from these mixed marriages, so that they may cautiously avoid the dangers which are found in them. But you will gain this object the more easily, if you have care that the faithful be seasonably instructed on the special obligation that binds them to hear the voice of the Church on this subject, and to obey their bishops, who will have to give a most strict account to the Eternal Prince of pastors, not only for sometimes allowing these mixed marriages for most grave reasons, but for too easily tolerating the contracting of marriages between the faithful and non-Catholics, at the will of those who ask it."

These are very solemn words. They point to exceedingly grave responsibilities in bishops who grant dispensations in mixed marriages. The Pontiffs, having the evils of mixed marriages in view,—even when, for the purpose of preventing greater evils, they grant their dispensations,—declare, not only that they grant them "with extreme reluctance," but that they grant them, "as it were dissembling certain things." Of this, both Benedict XIV and Pius VI made a solemn declaration at the foot of the crucifix. To any faithful Catholic contemplating such a marriage, this is awful to reflect upon. It is awful to the bishop who has to exercise his delegated power in granting such dispensations. It is awful to the priest who has to deal with the case.

Now, if the Holy See, for a very grave reason, grants a dispensation in the law prohibiting mixed marriages, it is only upon the following conditions:—

1. The Catholic party must be left free in the exercise of the Catholic religion; 2, the children must be brought up Catholics; 3, the Catholic party must promise to endeavor, by prayer, good example and other prudent means, to effect the conversion of the non-Catholic party.

No Catholic can in conscience enter upon a mixed marriage without having the fullest guarantees that the children will be brought up in the Catholic faith and worship. But what guarantees can be held secure when experience shows that the most solemn pledges are constantly broken? In many cases they are treated with absolute contempt and scorn. Severe as these words are, they are the severity of truth; for, alas! not few are the persons who hold to no point of honor where the Catholic religion is concerned.

It would be as unjust as ungenerous not to admit that there are non-Catholics who faithfully keep the promises which they made in marriage with Catholics, and truly respect the Catholic faith and religious exercises, and fulfil their pledges concerning the Catholic education of their children.

But prudence looks to what generally happens, and not to the exceptional cases. And wisdom never runs any serious risks in matters of the soul. The individuals, and even the families, that have fallen away from the faith through mixed marriages, amount to numbers incredible to those who have not examined the question thoroughly;

and the number of Catholics bound at this moment in mixed marriages, who live in a hard and bitter conflict for the exercise of their religion for themselves and for their children, and in certain cases for the soundness of their moral life, would, could all the facts be known, deter any thoughtful Catholic from contracting a mixed marriage.

Hence, although the Church reluctantly grants a dispensation in the bare hope of saving the Catholic party from worse evils, yet she looks at such an unnatural and unholy union with a face, as it were, half turned away; and to show her utter displeasure and sorrow at such an unholy alliance, she does not allow the banns to be published, nor permit the parties to enter the contract in the church before the holy altar—no, not even in the sacristy; the holy sacrifice is not offered up, nor is the priest allowed to impart to the parties the holy rite of nuptial benediction. If the priest is permitted to be present, it is only as a witness, divested of every sacred vestment. He is not allowed to perform any sacred ceremony whatever whilst the parties are repeating the words of the marriage contract.* With what consistency could the Church bless that which she declares to be sacrilegious?

Clement Augustus, Archbishop of Cologne, endured much suffering for his unceasing opposition to mixed marriages. The King of Prussia peremptorily commanded him to bless the marriages of Catholics and Protestants; but he firmly declined to do that which his conscience taught him to look upon with horror. One night his enemy, the king, had the archbishop's palace surrounded by troops, and in the dead of the night the aged and suffering prelate was torn from his bed, and hurried off to the fortress of Minden, where, for a long time, he was kept in the most rigorous captivity. He was approaching his sixty-fifth year when all this occurred. Eight years more of trial and glory were destined to complete his triumph. During that period the King of Prussia passed to his great account, and Clement Augustus soon followed him. The one has gone down to his grave with all the infamy which so justly attaches to a religious persecutor, whilst the unmerited sufferings and unshaken fortitude of the archbishop have excited the sympathy and admiration of Europe. His history is now blended with that of the Church of the nineteenth century. He will take his place amongst the most illustrious defenders of her liberties against the unjust aggressions of the civil power; and posterity will one day rank him with a Pius VII and a St. Thomas of Canterbury. (*The Catholic Offering.*)

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* "An casu matrimonii mixti coram sacerdote Catholico, sacerdos debet etiam omittere verba: Ego conjungo vos? Resp. Parochus assistens matrimonio mixtæ religionis se abstineat." (Decision of the Tribunal of the Holy Office, dated November 25, 1835.)

"Meminerint sacerdotes pluribus SS. Pontificum decretis vetari, ne ullus sacer ritus fiat, vel vestis sacra adhibeatur dum fœdera nuptiarum hujusmodi ineuntur quæ neque intra ecclesiam sunt ineunda." (Decree of the Provincial Council of Baltimore, held in the year 1840, and approved of by the Holy See.)

19. Is virginity or celibacy better than marriage?

"*Virginity,*" *says the catechism of the Council of Trent,* "*is highly recommended in Holy Scripture, and counselled to every one, because it is more profitable, and fuller of holiness and perfection, than the marriage state.*"

Those who have lost faith in Jesus Christ, faith in the holy Catholic Church, and have become gross in their minds, of "the earth earthy," deplore the lot of the women who, for good reasons, do not wish to become wives and mothers in the natural order, and call them contemptuously "old maids,"—a miserable relic of heathenism or Protestantism, neither of which has anything to hold out to old maids. But Jesus Christ has provided for them better than those faithless people can understand. No doubt, the married state is a holy state. In the Church of Christ it receives, from its character as sacrament, a certain degree of perfection; but all that it gains from that dignity is only greater stability and more abundant graces to overcome the difficulties and dangers which surround it. There are, among married persons, such as have reached a high degree of perfection; yet their state does not call for any higher perfection than that which is essential to charity, and which is required by the profession of the Christian religion. A few rare cases excepted—when, for instance, the public good of a whole country is concerned, or when a man, under promise of marriage, has brought shame and disgrace upon a young woman—marriage is neither commanded nor counselled. It is not commanded; for, "at present," says the catechism of the Council of Trent, "since the human race is sufficiently multiplied, there is no command ordaining marriage." Nor is marriage counselled; because it is but an action of inferior goodness. "As to the married state," wrote St. Alphonsus to a young man, "I cannot counsel it to you, since St. Paul does not counsel it to any one, except to those who cannot observe chastity:" and, even on these, marriage is obligatory only when they do not wish to make use of prayer and the sacraments as means against relapses. Since, then, there is neither a command nor a counsel for any one to spend even one hour in marriage, parents have no right to compel a child to marry; nor has any one a right to say that a person, who does not feel called to the religious life, is obliged to marry.

Virginity, however, is counselled in the Gospel. Something, to be a matter of counsel, must be better than the opposite work. As virginity is opposed to, and better than, marriage, it is counselled in Holy Scripture. After our Lord had spoken on the subject of marriage, the apostles said to him: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry." (Matt. xix, 10.) Our Lord approved of this conclusion, and declared that there are men who, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, can devote themselves to a life of perpetual continence: "He that can take it, let him take it." (Ibid. v, 12.)

Speaking on the subject of virginity, St. Paul says: "I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give counsel, as I think it is good to be in that state. . . . He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. . . . And so the unmarried woman and the virgin think of the things of the Lord, that they may be holy both in body and spirit. . . . In short, he that marries, does well; he that marries not, does better. . . . And if her husband die, a woman is at liberty to marry another, only in the Lord. But more blessed shall she be if she remain a widow, according to my counsel." (1 Cor. vii, 25.) And when he recommends marriage as a means of removing the danger of sin, he explains himself in these very clear terms: "I speak this by indulgence, not by commandment; for I would that all men were even as myself," that is, practise perfect chastity. (1 Cor. vii, 6.)

Although virginity is better than marriage, yet it is not commanded. "As to virgins," says St. Paul, "I have no command of the Lord" for them to lead a life of celibacy. Had our Lord commanded virginity, he would have seemed to condemn marriage and deprive men of the means to keep up their race. He also would have made it impossible to have virgins. It is, therefore, not surprising that he only taught us an angelic life, without forcing it on any one. He did not condemn those who do not feel courage enough to embrace the state of virginity; but, by leaving the life of virginity to our free choice, he has opened a glorious career of life to those who have courage enough to embrace it.

Virginity, which was regarded as a reproach, became an honor under the Christian law. Those women who do not wish to be wives and mothers in the natural order, may be both, in the spiritual order, if they will, and are properly educated for it. They can be wedded to the Holy Spirit, and be the mothers of minds and hearts. The holy virgins and devout widows who consecrated themselves to God, in or out of religious orders, are both, and fulfil, in the spiritual order, their proper destiny. We hold them in high honor, because they become mothers to the motherless, to the poor, to the forsaken, to the homeless. They instruct the ignorant, nurse the sick, help the helpless, tend the aged, catch the last breath of the dying, pray for the unbelieving and the cold-hearted, and elevate the moral tone of society, and shed a cheering radiance along the pathway of life. They have no need to be idle or useless. In a world of so much sin and sorrow, sickness and suffering, there is always work enough for them to do; it is on the poor and motherless, the destitute and the down-trodden, the sinful and the sorrowful, the aged and the infirm, the ignorant and the neglected, that, under proper direction, they can lavish the wealth of their affections, the tenderness of their hearts, and the ardor of their charity, and find true joy and happiness in so doing, ample scope for woman's noblest ambition, and chances enough to acquire merit in the sight of heaven, and true glory, that will shine brighter and brighter forever.

Behold that army, yea, that volunteer army, not commissioned or paid by the state, but by a greater power—God, who, for his love and that incomparable reward which only God bestows, devote themselves to teaching, instructing, training, and educating the poor, the needy, the orphan, the houseless, the homeless, the forlorn, the despised, as well as the more favored of the earth. These make no grandiloquent printed reports in costly binding; they have no official stenographers or reporters to noise their proceedings in "morning papers;" they have no "polytechnic halls," fitted up with pretentious libraries, and all the surroundings of upholstery and heating and cooling apparatus; but winter and summer, early and late, they keep the even tenor of their way with an "eye single" to their humble and laborious duties.

In nearly all the cities of America, in those busy and worldly centres of traffic and trade, of luxury and wealth, with their average of good and evil, virtue and crime, this "volunteer army" distributes itself noiselessly, quietly, and, as it were, obscurely, not heralded nor preceded by the emblems of pomp or worldly power, but nevertheless making its conquests and asserting its quiet influence in lanes and alleys, gathering up the little children, taking them to its camps, and instructing and educating them in the service of God and society.

You may have seen, in some of those cities, that long line of little boys and girls, two by two, extending to the length of a block or more; you may have observed how regularly they are assorted, the tallest in front, and ranging down to the little ones, whose busy feet are trying to keep up with the column. You may also have noted the order and silence (so unusual among children), and your attention was arrested: and perhaps you know not how all this order in this beautiful panorama was brought about. Well, with these boys you may have observed two men—one at the head, the other at the foot, of this long line. If you saw this for the first time you may have wondered, and, I suppose, been even amused, at the figure and costume of those men: the broad-brimmed hat, the long, strange-fashioned robe, the white collar, the collected air and mien,—all bespeak the *Christian Brother*. These men, nevertheless, are "profoundly learned in all the sciences of the schools." They have abandoned home, family, friends, and have devoted themselves, merely for a scant support, to the education of the young.

If, on the other hand, the long line are girls, you may have observed two ladies—one at the head, the other at the foot. You will at a glance conclude they are not of the world. Their costume is of the homeliest cut and quality, but scrupulously clean; there is something about their very presence that impresses you with reverence and respect, and you must be a very hardened sinner indeed, if you did not feel the better of having even their shadow fall upon you. These silent, collected, but impressive women are *Nuns* of one order or another. They, too, have left all to serve God in the persons of these little children. They have made sacrifices greater than the world can appreciate or understand, and which only the Divine Master can reward. Their whole life is a silent, but an eloquent sermon, their whole conduct the gospel in action. You will remember they are women like others of their sex, and mayhap have been flattered and petted, and once filled with the natural vanity and expectations of their sex; but all these they have put *behind* them, and henceforth and forever their walk and life and conversation are with God, and in the service of his little ones. Now, it will be easily seen that the personal influence of such men and women over the life and manners of children must be immensely beneficial. It is granted that the influence of father and mother is potential for good or evil. So it is with teachers. Children are shrewd observers, and are apt to take some one as a prototype and exemplar. This one they copy as near as may be. These Christian Brothers and Nuns or Sisters are good models; they teach the children to pray in the best of all ways—by praying themselves first; they try to impress on these tender souls sentiments of love, obedience, and respect to their fathers and mothers, and, above all, their duties to our dear Lord. They accompany them to his altar on Sundays and holydays, beginning and ending all their daily lessons with a little prayer or devotion. For the rest, they give them, in their schools, a plain, practical education.

Thus, those devoted to a life of virginity are far more useful to society and to themselves than if they were married.

Our divine Redeemer assures us that in heaven there shall be *no* marriage: the blessed in heaven shall not marry or be given in marriage, but they shall be like the angels of God. Now, the chaste soul anticipates here on earth the life of heaven, and lives as an angel amid the dangers and corruptions of this world. It is true there is a difference between an angel and a pure soul, but they differ in happiness *only*, and not in virtue. The chastity of the angel is more happy, but the chastity of a pure soul is more heroic. Yes, I repeat it, if the chastity of the angels is happier, yet the chastity of a pure soul is more virtuous, more heroic. I know full well that the angels are most pure and sinless, but it is their nature to be so. The angels are pure spirits. They are free from all the restraints of matter; they are free from the miseries of this life; they live in heaven. They stand not in need of food, or drink, or sleep. They have not to wage continual war against wild, unruly passions—against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The sweetest song, the most ravishing melodies, cannot charm *them.* The fairest forms of earthly beauty cannot allure *them.* If, then, they are chaste, they are so without struggling, without suffering. But when weak man—sinful by nature, subject to a thousand wants, condemned to live in the midst of a corrupt world, with dangers within and dangers without, dangers on every side; when weak man struggles bravely against his very self, against the pleasures of the senses, against the charms of the world, against the allurements of the demon; when weak man struggles untiringly against his most deadly enemies, who cease not to tempt him, day or night, waking or sleeping, at work as in prayer, in the solitude of his chamber as on the busy street; and when, with the grace of God, man triumphs over all,—triumphs through a long, weary life of ceaseless warfare, and lives as an angel, ah! that is noble, that is heroic, that is sublime, that is godlike.

Yes, a chaste soul is not only more bright and beautiful than all the beauties of nature, she is not only the brightest ornament of the holy Church, she stands not only on a level with the angels—nay, she is superior to the angels: she is like unto God. No wonder, then, that the virtue of chastity is so much loved and admired by God and by men. Even the brute creation, even inanimate nature, loves and honors a chaste soul. We can find innumerable examples of this in the lives of the saints. Whenever the Blessed Agnes, of Monte Pulciano, went out walking in the garden or in the fields, the flowers began to bud and bloom around her, as if her very presence brought them the sunshine and the fresh air of paradise. Whenever St. Francis of Assisi went to walk in the woods, the little birds fluttered around him and perched on his shoulders, and sang to him, in their own tiny way, the praises of God; and then the saint, full of joy, would caress them, call them his "dear little sisters," and then would give them his blessing. Even the wild beasts grew tame in the presence of this chaste soul. They forgot their fierceness and obeyed his voice, as they obeyed, in days of old, the voice of Adam in the garden of paradise. There is, in the virtue of chastity, something so beautiful, so majestic, so glorious, that even the heathens, even the fierce savages—nay, even the most corrupt and degraded hearts,—hearts dead to every sense of shame and honor, cannot help admiring and loving it. We can see from history how highly the virtue of chastity was honored by the corrupt pagan nations of Egypt and Rome, as well as by the savage tribes of ancient Gaul; and at the present day we hear, on every side, the cry of admiration which is wrung from the hearts of even our most bitter enemies, by the pure lives of those ministering angels, the Sisters of Charity. See them, during the late war, going through the hospitals, going through the midst of the dead and the dying, going unharmed through the midst of friends and foes. Where was the man so degraded, so brutalized, that dared insult a Sister of Charity? Now, why this universal respect? Ah! it is because they were virgins.

O how beautiful is a chaste generation! Truly, it is esteemed, it is admired, it is loved by God and by man! The holy Church, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, esteems so highly the virtue of chastity, that she requires it as an indispensable condition of all her servants. No one can ascend the steps of her altars and open the tabernacle in which Jesus reposes; no one can bear the glorious Son of the Virgin Mary in triumphal procession; no one can call down the eternal Son of God from the highest heavens,—no one but the *priest*, and *he* must be a *virgin!* No one can preach the word of God to encourage the good and to convert the sinner; no one can strike off the chains of sin in the tribunal of penance, and cleanse the soul in the precious blood of Jesus Christ; no one can administer that heavenly food which is the life to the world; no one can prepare the soul for its fearful passage into eternity,—no one, I repeat it, but the *priest*, and he must be *chaste*, he must be a *virgin*. Do you not see, then, that the salvation of the entire world depends in a certain degree upon the preservation of holy chastity?

But not only does inanimate nature, not only do the wild beasts, not only do the most degraded men, not only does the holy Catholic Church, honor and esteem the virtue of chastity—God himself honors and loves this virtue with a most special love. God is a most pure spirit, and the source of all purity. The Son of God is begotten eternally of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son; but this generation, this procession, is shrouded in the dazzling splendor of ineffable purity. When God created the world, he placed his own seal upon his creatures, and this seal was—holy purity. The angels were the first works of his hands, and he made them pure and spotless. When God created our first parents and placed them in the garden of Eden, he created them pure and sinless virgins. And when the ever-blessed Son of God came upon the earth to redeem us, he chose for his *forerunner* a pure virgin, a virgin sanctified from his mother's womb; a virgin to whom the prophet had given the glorious title of "angel of God:" it was the great St. John the Baptist.

And of whom was Jesus born? Whom did Jesus choose before all others to be his Mother? Ah! you know it well; it was the blessed among women—it was the stainless lily, the ornament and glory of our race—it was the immaculate Virgin Mary. So greatly does God love and prize the virtue of holy chastity, that, in order to preserve it unsullied in his blessed Mother, he superseded the laws of nature; he wrought an unheard-of miracle, and Mary became a fruitful mother and remained a spotless virgin. And whom did Jesus choose before all men to be his foster-father? Whom did he choose to be spouse and guardian of his blessed Mother? It was the humble St. Joseph. And St. Joseph was a virgin. Which of all the disciples did Jesus love most tenderly? Who was it that rested his head upon the bosom of Jesus at the last supper, and heard the throbbings of his sacred heart? To whom did Jesus bequeath his own dear Mother, as he hung expiring upon the cross? Ah! it was no other than the Evangelist of love—the virgin St. John. And who were the first flowers, the first sweet roses of the redemption? They were the Holy Innocents and the virgin martyr, St. Stephen. Even those among the apostles who were married, left their wives as soon as Jesus called them to his service, and lived ever after in holy chastity.

You know how great was the love which Jesus bore to little children. He loved to see them around him; and when the apostles wished to drive them away, Jesus said: "Let those little children come to me." Then Jesus took the little ones in his arms; he embraced them and blessed them, and said to those around him: "Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus Christ assures us that the guardian angels of little children are always gazing in the face of his heavenly Father; that is, they are always praying for God's most special protection over those little ones. Then Jesus pronounces a most terrible woe against all those that lead children into sin: "Woe to him," he says, "that scandalizes one of those little ones. It were better for him that a millstone were tied around his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." Now, why does Jesus love children with such a special love? Why does he watch over them with such tender care? Why does he guard and protect them with more than mother's love? Ah, it is because children are yet pure, because they are yet innocent.

But even if we had no other proof of the unspeakable beauty, the inestimable value, of holy chastity, the example of our divine Saviour *alone* would draw all hearts irresistibly to love this angelic virtue. Jesus himself, as you know, was a virgin, and he loved his virginity with a jealous love. Our blessed Redeemer was the most meek and humble of men. The perfidious Jews sought to blacken his character by the foulest calumnies, and he bore it *all* with patience. They called him a heretic and a false prophet. They sneered at him on account of his poverty; they called him a Galilean, a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter. They treated him as an ignorant clown, as a madman, and even as one possessed by the devil. Those wicked men were not ashamed to tell our dear Lord to his face that he was a sorcerer and a minister of Satan. Our blessed Redeemer bore all these taunts and calumnies with the patience of a God. But there was one sin—one stain that he never suffered to be branded upon his character, and that was the stain of *impurity*. *Never* did his most bitter enemies dare to accuse him of such a sin. Nay, he challenged them publicly; he defied them to their teeth to convict him of any sin, or even the least shadow of a sin, against this holy virtue—so dear to his heart was this heavenly virtue, so jealous was he of the honor of holy purity.

O holy, O lovely, O divine virtue of purity! how wonderful, how amiable, how beautiful must thou be, since thou hast captivated the heart of God himself! Yes, the beauty of holy chastity has so enamoured the heart of Jesus, that he has chosen the most endearing words that language can find to express his ardent love for pure souls. When Jesus speaks to *ordinary* Christians, he calls them his servants, and he is their Master. When he speaks to faithful and obedient souls, he calls them his sheep, and he is their Shepherd. When he speaks to his beloved disciples, he calls them his friends, his brethren; but, when he speaks to the chaste soul—ah! then he uses far more tender language; he calls her his sister, his spouse: "*Soror mea, sponsa.*" He calls her his *sister*, for his love is pure as a sister's love. He calls her his *spouse*, for his love is always tender and ardent as the love of a bridegroom for his bride.

O chaste souls! I speak especially to you, whose hearts are yet pure and unsullied—to you, whose souls are yet gleaming with the glory of virginity. O, for the love of Jesus, be mindful of your dignity! Remember that in the holy sacrament of baptism you became the living temples of the living God, and the Holy Ghost took up his dwelling in your hearts. You became children of God, heirs of heaven, and spouses of Jesus Christ. Yes, this is the dignity to which God has called you. And who is Jesus—who is this heavenly bridegroom, who wishes to claim your hearts? Ah! you know it already; he is the glorious Son of the Virgin Mary, conceived in her chaste womb by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. He is beautiful—the most beautiful of the children of men. He is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands. His is a beauty that never wearies,—a beauty that never fades. His beauty is the joy of the blessed in heaven; it is a beauty on which the angels gaze with ever-flowing delight. All the beauty of earth and heaven is but a feeble ray of his unutterable beauty.

Jesus is *loving*. O how faithful, how ardent, is the love of Jesus Christ! He has loved you from all eternity. He has made every sacrifice to win your love. He has loved you even unto death, to the death of the cross. He will never abandon you, unless you yourself cast him from you; and when, at the hour of death, the nearest and dearest forsake you, then will Jesus stand at your bed side; he will console you and deliver your soul from the hands of your enemies.

And Jesus is *powerful*. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords; he is the Judge of the living and the dead; he is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible. He is God. At his name every knee must bend in heaven, on earth, and in hell. The heavens above are his throne; the earth, beneath, his footstool. At his touch the sick are healed, and the dead restored to life. He speaks, and the wild winds grow calm; the foaming waves subside at his voice. He calls the stars by name, and they answer to his call. Thousands of angels minister unto him, and a thousand times ten thousand surround him, and await his bidding in trembling awe.

And Jesus is *rich.* All the gold of the mountains, all the pearls of the ocean, are his. His are all the treasures of earth, and sea, and sky. He opens his hand, and all creatures are filled with his blessings.

The holy virgin martyr, St. Agnes, was sought in marriage by a rich and powerful youth of Rome. When she heard his proposal, she answered: "Begone from me, food of death! My heart already belongs to another." Then the young nobleman, who loved her passionately, offered her countless treasures. He offered her gold and pearls, and precious stones and costly garments. He offered her all the honors, all the wealth, he had inherited from his ancestors. The virgin smiled in pity at such an offer. "You offer me riches," she answered, "and my bridegroom possesses all the treasures of earth and heaven. He has placed on my finger the bridal ring. He has given me a bridal robe more costly than the queens of earth can wear. He has adorned my ears with glittering jewels, and my neck with costly pearls. He has placed on my brow a bridal crown, whose glory shall never fade, and his blood is upon my cheek." When at length the holy virgin was condemned to die because she would not renounce her heavenly bridegroom, Jesus, she went to the place of death like a bride hastening to the marriage-feast. All who saw her wept; but Agnes did not weep. The hands of the executioner trembled, his face grew pale, and the tears started unbidden to his eyes; but Agnes smiled, for she feared not death. "Why do you wait?" she cried; "strike, and let me die for him who has died for me! Strike, and let this body perish, which can be loved by another than him whom I love." Then the virgin raised her eyes and hands to heaven: "O Jesus!" she said, "I have yearned for thee; now I possess thee. I have loved thee on earth; now I shall love thee forever in heaven." Then the youthful virgin knelt and bowed her head. With her own delicate hands she turned aside her long golden hair, and bared her neck to the blow, and Agnes remained a *virgin* and received the martyr's crown.

Ah! who is there that would not love such a bridegroom as Jesus? Well might even the angels envy the happiness that is granted to us frail and sinful mortals. The angels are but the ministers of Jesus; chaste souls alone are his spouses. I know full well that all are not called to live in perpetual viginity, but *all* are called to lead *pure lives;* all are called to observe chastity according to their state, for nothing impure can enter heaven. I know that all are not called to lead on earth the life of virgins, but I say, *blessed* are they that are called: "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-feast of the Lamb." Blessed are they here on *earth*, and thrice blessed are they in *heaven!* All the joys and pleasures of this earth cannot be compared to the happiness of a pure soul.

A virgin is free from all the cares and anxieties and burdens of a married life. You know, perhaps, how bitter these cares and anxieties are, and that nothing but death can relieve them. Indeed, so great and so numerous are the miseries of married life, that, could people have a year of noviceship before binding themselves to that state, I fear there would be but few vocations. If any one thinks that I exaggerate, I would refer him to statistics, where he can find the number of divorces that have, within the past few years, been granted in our own enlightened republic, as well as in the various parts of the civilized world.

Now, a virgin is free from all these cares. Her care, her only care, is to please her heavenly bridegroom, Jesus Christ—to make herself beautiful in his eyes. She only thinks of *his* beauty, *his* mercy, *his* love. Jesus is her joy, her peace, her paradise. You would wish me to describe to you the pleasures of holy chastity, but I would ask you: Can you describe the sweetness of honey to one who has never tasted it? No; and neither can I describe to you the sweet pleasures of holy chastity, unless you yourself have tasted these pleasures. Language has no words to describe them to one who has never experienced them. But, believe me, the joys of holy chastity far surpass all the pleasures of the senses, all the joys of earth. If you wish to be convinced of what I say, then go, stand beside the death-bed of a pure soul; behold the calm joy that beams on her face, listen to the sweet song of gladness that flows from her lips.

When the Blessed Mary of Oignies was about to die, her soul was filled with such heavenly joy that she could no longer contain it within her breast. She burst forth into a melodious hymn of praise and gladness. For three days and three nights she continued to sing, and her voice only grew louder and stronger as she drew near her end; and it was sweet and clear as the voice of an angel. She continued thus to sing until her pure soul went forth to join in the melodious choirs of the blessed in heaven. Thus died this chaste soul, and thus, too, have thousands died who served God in holy chastity.

Now, I ask you: Can that soul have been sad and unhappy during life who can sing and rejoice at the hour of death? Can he have feared pain or sorrow who smiles and exults in the very face of death? Ah! to the chaste soul death is a welcome messenger, who tells her that the Bridegroom calls, that the marriage-feast is ready. And blessed, aye, thrice blessed is he that is called to the marriage-feast of the Lamb!

St. John was taken up in spirit to the summit of a lofty mountain, and there he beheld a faint glimpse of the unutterable glory that is reserved for virgins in heaven. "Behold," he says, "I saw a Lamb standing on Mount Sion, and there were with him one hundred and forty-four thousand, who bore his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven. It was as the noise of many waters, and as the sound of great thunder; and the sound that I heard was as a voice of harpers playing on their harps. And they sang a new canticle before the throne; and no one can sing that canticle but those who have been purchased from the earth. These are they who have never been defiled with women, for they are virgins, and they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

O how great must be the glory of virgins in heaven! Star differs from star in brightness, but the radiant star of virginity shall shine with a brightness that far exceeds all others. The virgins shall bear the name of the Lamb, the sweet name of Jesus, and the ineffable name of God, upon their forehead. They shall sing a canticle which no one else can sing; a *new* canticle, a canticle far surpassing in sweetness and sublimity the melodies of the angels and the hymns of the rest of the blessed. And the virgins shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Others, indeed, shall follow the Lamb, but the *virgins* shall be the nearest to their divine Bridegroom. All the blessed shall be filled with joy, and no one shall envy the other; but of all the blessed, the virgins shall be the most intimately united to Jesus; they shall receive from him as their Bridegroom the most tender marks of his love; they shall be the darlings of his sacred heart, the fondlings of his immaculate Mother.

Such, then, is the lustre of the holiness and perfection of the virtue of virginity. Hence, "if any one asserts," says the Council of Trent, "that it is not a better and a more blessed thing to remain in virginity or celibacy than to be united in matrimony, let him be anathema." (Sess. xxiv, Can. 10.) To dissuade, then, a person from embracing celibacy by declaring that marriage is as perfect as celibacy, is to sin against faith. To give utterance to such a declaration, or to approve of it, or to give internal assent to it, is to cease to be a Catholic. Instead of discouraging souls, we should rather encourage them to lead a life of perfection and to practise the counsels of the Gospel. "It is the duty of pastors of souls," says the catechism of the Council of Trent, "to have at heart the holiness and perfection of the faithful. Hence, they should desire, above all, what the apostle wished, when he wrote to the Corinthians, 'I wish that all men were like myself;' that is, that all should practise continence, or perfect chastity. Indeed, in this life, the most blessed thing for a Christian is, to have his mind free from all the distractions and solicitudes of the world, to reign over his passions, and to subdue especially all the desires of the flesh, so as to make them almost extinct for the love of virtue, and to repose in the practice of piety, and in the contemplation of heavenly things."

"But all take not this word," says our Lord, "but they to whom it is given." (Matt. xix, 11.) Hence, there are such as discourage or dissuade souls from embracing the state of virginity. But they are not of the number of "those men by whom salvation was wrought in Israel." They are of the number of those of whom our Lord says: "These things are hidden from the wise and prudent, and are revealed to the little ones." (Matt. xi, 25.) Such persons should never be consulted on the subject of virginity or of a religious vocation, because they have no divine light on it; nor should they be listened to when they speak of this subject, of which they understand nothing: "It is not a good, but a bad spirit," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "that guides him who resists the Holy Ghost. When a soul, by the grace of God, has made holy resolutions, it is great cruelty to oppose them. It is to have the malice of Herod, who killed newly-born infants. But far greater is the malice of those who stifle in souls, even before birth, the holy desires which they have conceived. Persons of this kind appear to me worse than the infernal dragon who stood up before the woman about to give birth, and ready to devour her offspring as soon as it should be born." (*De Erudit. Principum*, lib. 5, c. xxx.) Those, on the contrary, who are filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ and of the apostles, say with St. Paul: "But more blessed shall she be if she so remain" (unmarried), "according to my counsel: and I think that I also have the spirit of God." (1 Cor. vii, 40.) "This apostle," says Cornelius à Lapide, "was put to death by Nero, because he persuaded young Christian maidens to consecrate themselves to God in a life of virginity. St. Matthew, also, had to suffer martyrdom, because he had persuaded St. Iphigenia, daughter of the King of Ethiopia, to make the vow of virginity. In imitation of the apostles, St. Clement, too, did not hesitate to give the virgin's veil to the niece of the Emperor Domitian, although he knew that thereby he would expose himself and the Christians to cruel persecution. A man of worldly prudence, no doubt, would have looked upon such an action as very unwise. But St. Clement, who was wise after the Spirit of God, was aware that virginity is of so great a price in the sight of the Lord, that it is lawful to purchase it even at the cost of martyrdom. He knew that God watches over his own, and that it is heroic virtue not to yield to any kind of threats, especially when there is question of preserving the treasure of virginity." (In Apoc. 14.)

St. Athanasius, St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, St. Alphonsus, highly recommended virginity in their sermons and instructions. We read that St. Ambrose, on one occasion, consecrated eight hundred virgins to God. We read, in the history of the Church, by Darras, that, in Oxyrinchus, a town of Lower Thebais, there were twenty thousand virgins consecrated to God. Father Ventura tells us that, in the middle ages, every family deemed it an honor to be able to give a spouse to Jesus Christ; and that it was considered a disgrace for a family who had several daughters, not to have one consecrated to God in the state of virginity. Fathers and mothers who were without children, asked them of God for no other purpose than to be able to consecrate them to his service. (Ventura, "*Femme Catholique.*")

St. Ambrose tells us, in his exhortation to virginity, that a pious widow, named Juliana, addressed her children in the following manner: "My dear children, let me advise you to embrace what is most noble and most lovely in this world—the life of angels among men. I have gone through the troubles of a married life. You see me deprived of the assistance of a husband and of the grace of virginity. My cross will be much lighter, and my grief more bearable, if I recover in you what I have lost in myself; that is, if I am the mother of virgin children, I will believe that I share, in some measure, in the same honor of virginity." These words sunk deep in the hearts of her children. In fact, her son Lawrence became a priest, and her three daughters led a life of virginity in their mother's home.

St. Jerome tells us that the Roman Consul Olibrius had a daughter of great beauty, named Demetrias. She was heiress to a large fortune, and occupied the first rank in the city of Rome. The best of alliances were offered to her. But she wished for no other spouse than Jesus Christ. She besought God, day and night, with many tears, to incline the hearts of her parents in favor of her heartfelt desire. So, one day, she went to Juliana, her mother, and Proba, her grandmother, to disclose to them her great desire of belonging to God alone, beseeching them on her knees not to oppose her resolution. As Juliana and Proba earnestly wished to see their child consecrated to God, they took her most affectionately in their arms and said: "God bless you, child; you will raise your family to a still greater nobility, by bestowing on it the glory and honor of virginity." (St. Jerome, *Epist. ad Demetriad.*)

Now, if virginity is so highly recommended in Holy Scripture and in the writings of the fathers of the Church, no one is to infer from this fact that marriage is to be despised. "When I advise virginity," says St. John Chrysostom, "I thereby do not wish to pass any censure on marriage; nor do I blame him who does not follow my counsel. To say that marriage is bad is to inflict ignominy on virginity; on the contrary, to honor marriage is to praise virginity. I admire, indeed, those who have sufficient courage to embrace the state of virginity; but I have no fault to find with those who have not sufficient strength to aim at so high a perfection." (*De Virginit.*, c. viii.) Although I say with St. Paul, "I would that all men were even as myself," yet I also say with the same apostle: "Every one hath his proper gift from God: one after this manner, another after that." (1 Cor. vii, 7.) I also say with Jesus Christ, "He that can take it"—referring to virginity—"let him take it" (Matt. xix, 12); let him imitate the example of so many holy virgins, especially that of St. Flavia Domitilla.

The story of Flavia Domitilla's life is very interesting. She was a person of high rank, being cousin to the emperors Titus and Domitian, and, what was much better, many of her relations were saints and martyrs; for she was the daughter of St. Plautilla, and niece to Flavius Clemens, who also was a martyr. She had two servants, Nereus and Achilleus, who were brothers, and had been converted by the preaching of St. Peter. They were so much more faithful and well conducted than any of her other servants, that she could not help noticing them; and when she came to speak to them, she was even more pleased with them. They said that they were Christians;

and when she asked them what it was to be a Christian, they told her all about a future state, and the great day of judgment, and how Jesus Christ had become man and had died on the cross to save sinners. She liked very much to hear them speak about these things, and she used very often to escape from her gay companions, and go to talk quietly with them, till at last she was converted and was baptized.

As Flavia Domitilla was of the emperor's family, and was besides very rich, many young noblemen wished to marry her; and after some time her friends engaged her to Aurelian, a handsome and agreeable young man of high birth. Domitilla was very much pleased with the idea of this marriage, and, being a gay young girl, she thought only of dressing herself and making herself look as beautiful as she could, in order that Aurelian might be the more in love with her. One day, when she was busy choosing the most elegant dress she could think of, and arranging all her jewels, so as to be most becoming to her, her two faithful servants, Nereus and Achilleus, said to her: "Ah! dear madam, if you would but take the same care to adorn your soul with virtues as you do to deck out your body, you would not fail to win the love of Jesus Christ, the King of heaven; and he would take you to be his spouse, and then this beauty of yours, which will now so quickly fade, would last forever, and you would become even much more beautiful than you are now, and would shine gloriously in the court of heaven." Domitilla did not much fancy this sort of advice, and she answered: "All that is very true, but still there is no sin in marrying; and if I am to marry, I may just as well take pains to set myself off properly, and to win the love of my husband, so that I may be happy in my marriage." Then Nereus replied: "You look only on the pleasures of this life, which so quickly pass away, and do not think about the everlasting happiness of heaven; you look on the advantages of marriage, and not on the trouble and misery which it may bring on you." And then he and Achilleus went on to show her how, when she became a wife, she gave herself up to a man of whom she could know but little till she went to live with him, and who would, perhaps, treat her very unkindly. For, if he took a fancy, he might shut her up and not let her see her father and mother or any of her old friends; or, if he were jealous, he might be angry with her for every word she spoke, and everything she did innocently; or, if he were ill-tempered, he might beat her, and use rough and harsh language to her. And then, if she should have children, they would be a continual cause of anxiety and trouble to her, from the very time of their birth, for they would be ill, or they would be hurting themselves, or they would be disobedient and unruly, or they would not be so clever or so handsome as she wished them to be; and then there would be the care of nursing them, and teaching them, and putting them forward in the world; and perhaps, after all, they would die young, or, what is worse, they might live to be a disgrace to their family, and a curse both to themselves and to their parents. They said all this and much more, which might well make a young girl think twice before she married.

After they had gone through all the troubles and anxieties of marriage, Nereus began to speak of the blessed state of virginity. "A virgin," said he, "lives on earth the life which the angels live in heaven, and she will have in heaven a bright crown, which is given to no one but virgins. She has God for her husband, and she knows that he can never treat her unkindly; whatever she tries to do for love of him, he will be pleased with; he will never neglect or forsake her, but he will always be with her, speaking sweetly to her, and putting happy and holy thoughts into her heart; and she will be free from all the cares of this world, and will not be afraid of sickness or any misfortunes that may happen to her, for his arms will always be round her, his beautiful countenance will always be smiling on her, and the thought of his love will be a paradise of unspeakable happiness to her. Think, then, my dear young mistress, which husband is the best, and choose him whom you think you can love most: either a mortal man, who, be he ever so good, will one day die and leave you; or Jesus Christ, who will never die, but who will rejoice and bless you with his company for ever and ever."

Domitilla was very much struck with what Nereus and Achilleus said. Her conscience told her that they were right, and a voice within her seemed to call her to be the spouse of Jesus. But how could she give up all the things of which she was so fond—her beautiful dresses, her costly jewels, the gay company she was in the habit of keeping, and, above all, the love of Aurelian? It was a hard struggle between the love of God and the love of the world; and for a short time it seemed as if the world must conquer. For the devil whispered to her that, after all, there was no need to give up all these things: for why could not she marry Aurelian, and yet love Jesus, as many married women did? But then there flashed across her mind the words of the apostle St. Paul: "The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband." And she felt and knew that it was her whole self our Lord was asking of her, and that he would not be satisfied if she gave him only half her heart. So she tried to look at the matter simply and earnestly, and she prayed to God to guide her and to give her strength to do his will, whatever it might be. At last the grace of God triumphed, and she exclaimed: "Would to God I had heard all this before I was engaged to be married! But, even now, it may not be too late, and God may yet open to me some means by which I may get free from Aurelian." On hearing these words, Nereus and Achilleus gave fervent thanks to God, who, by his grace, had brought their mistress into such a good disposition of mind; and they earnestly exhorted her to make an offering of herself to God, and to trust confidently and lovingly in him. The next question was, how she was to break off the marriage. This was a subject which required some consideration; for it was not to be supposed that Aurelian would submit quietly to lose his rich and beautiful young wife; and if he made any disturbance about it, her change of religion would come to the ears of the emperor, who was beginning just then to persecute the Christians. And now the devil set before her the trials that she was going to draw on herself: the dark dungeon, the scourging, the rack, the wild beasts, the fire, and all the horrible torments that were inflicted on Christians; and he asked her how a thoughtless young girl like herself, who had spent her life in dressing and amusing herself, could bear such things as these. All that he put into her head seemed very sensible, and, when she thought about the tortures, she could not help shuddering, and she felt that, if she thought much about these things, she should not have the courage to keep her resolution. So she determined to put away all these thoughts with which the devil was tempting her, and not to trouble herself about consequences; and she committed herself confidently to the care of her dearest spouse, Jesus, trusting entirely to his love, and beseeching him to take care of her and to give her strength to do his will, and to bear whatever trials he might send her.

Nereus and Achilleus, meanwhile, had gone to the pope, St. Clement, and had told him that she wished to consecrate her virginity to Jesus, and to become his spouse instead of marrying Aurelian. The Church of Rome was now in great trouble on account of the persecution, and the Holy Father was in constant anxiety for those of his flock who were being persecuted, lest they should not bear their trials with fortitude. It was, therefore, a great joy and encouragement to him that a young girl like Flavia Domitilla should wish, in a time like this, to consecrate herself to God's service, for he knew that nothing but the grace of God could lead her to make such a holy resolution. He was filled with joy and courage, and he exclaimed: "It seems to me that the time is not far off when our Lord will be pleased to crown you and me and Domitilla with martyrdom; and since he commands us not to fear those who kill the body, but cannot hurt the soul, let us not care for the displeasure of the emperor, but let us boldly obey God, who is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth." He then went with Nereus and Achilleus to the house of Flavia Domitilla; and after talking to her, and finding that she had a true vocation, and was ready to suffer everything for the love of Jesus, he consecrated her to be his spouse, and to spend her life in loving and serving him.

It was not long before the troubles which Domitilla expected came upon her. At first, Aurelian would not believe that she really meant to break off the marriage; he thought it was a whimsical fancy, and he did not doubt but that he should soon bring her round by flattering words and beautiful presents. But when he found that she would not listen to his words, and that she refused his presents, he began to look more seriously on the matter, and complained to the emperor. Domitian was very angry when he learned that she was a Christian, and he ordered her to be brought before his tribunal. Then this gentle and timid girl, who had never before appeared in public, and had always been treated with the greatest respect and kindness, was roughly seized and brought a prisoner into a public court of justice. Domitian spoke to her in coarse, insulting language, he encouraged the people who were present to laugh at her and revile her, and he tried to frighten her by threatening to inflict the most horrible torments on her. But she remained quite unmoved; till, at last, Domitian, finding he could do nothing with her, gave her her choice, either to sacrifice immediately to the gods, or to be banished to the island of Pontia. The choice was made without a moment's hesitation, and Flavia Domitilla was sent off to Pontia.

In these days, when people have broken the law, they are sometimes transported to a penal settlement; and though it is a great punishment to them to be taken away from their homes and their families, and to be obliged to work very hard, yet they have the comfort of knowing that they will at all events meet with comparatively fair treatment. But it was quite different with those who were banished by the Roman emperors. They were put in charge of some wicked man, who thought only how he could make them most wretched; and he would often torture them, or kill them secretly, if he knew that the emperor wished to get rid of them. This was the sort of way in which Flavia Domitilla was now treated. She was not allowed to see any of her friends; she was lodged in close, unhealthy rooms; she was fed with coarse, unwholesome food; she could not walk in the garden or move a step without being watched; she was treated rudely by the servants and soldiers who waited on her and guarded her; and if it was noticed that she took pleasure in one thing more than another, she was immediately deprived of it.

Most people would have been very much irritated by this sort of petty persecution, carried on every day and all day long. But Domitilla did not seem to notice or to feel the things that were done to vex and annoy her. She gave herself entirely into the hands of her dearest spouse, Jesus Christ, and she knew that whatever happened to her was ordered by him. When we love a person very much, we like to do what he wishes; and so Domitilla was very happy to live in close rooms, and to eat coarse food, and to be watched by the soldiers and treated rudely by the servants, because she loved Jesus, and knew that it was his will that these things should happen to her. She had still one great consolation, which was the company of Nereus and Achilleus, who had followed her to Pontia. They waited on her most affectionately, they did all they could to make her more comfortable, and, above all, they talked to her about Jesus, who was so dear to them all.

After some time Aurelian came to see her, hoping to find that she was tired out with all that she had suffered in her banishment, and was ready to marry him. He was very much surprised to see how calm and joyful she looked, and to hear her talk of the great happiness she was enjoying. He looked round at the wretched room in which she was confined, and he was puzzled to think what could make her so happy where other people would have been very miserable. He saw, however, that she had still one consolation, which was the company of Nereus and Achilleus, and he was so selfish and cruel as to take them away from her.

As Nereus and Achilleus were only slaves, he might do whatever he liked to them. So he had them cruelly scourged, and then sent them to Terracina, to a friend of his, called Memmius Rufus, who was governor of the place, and he told him to punish them as severely as he could, because they were obstinate Christians. Memmius Rufus, at first, tried to persuade them to sacrifice to the gods; but they declared that nothing in the whole world would ever induce them to give up what the apostle St. Peter had taught them. He, therefore, determined to see what would come of these words when they were put to the torture, and he ordered them to be placed on a horrible wooden machine, called the horse, which was used for torturing slaves. Here their limbs were drawn out of joint, and their sinews were strained to the farthest stretch, and at the same time plates of red-hot iron were applied to their sides and other parts of their naked bodies, so as to burn them dreadfully. But in the midst of their agony they remained unmoved, and broke out into songs of triumphant joy, as each fresh torture was inflicted on them. Memmius Rufus, at last, saw that it was hopeless to conquer their constancy, and he had them beheaded.

Aurelian hoped that, now that Nereus and Achilleus were gone, Domitilla would soon make up her mind to marry him, and to return to the gay life she used formerly to live at Rome. But he was again mistaken. Though Nereus and Achilleus had been a great comfort to Domitilla, yet it was in Jesus that her real strength and comfort lay; and now that he had been pleased to let her friends be taken from her, she looked only the more simply to him for support and consolation. And so it came to pass that, when Aurelian again visited her, expecting to find her dull and out of spirits, she was even more firm in her faith and more happy than she had been when he was there before.

Aurelian was now convinced that there was no hope of conquering Domitilla's obstinacy by keeping her in the island of Pontia, and so he determined to take her away and marry her by force. He, therefore, carried her with him to Terracina, and invited a large party to be present at his wedding. Aurelian and his friends began to feast and make merry, while poor Domitilla was shut up in a room alone, sad and trembling, waiting till Aurelian should come to her and force her to marry him. It seemed now that all hope was lost, and that she must at last be obliged to marry him.

But still Domitilla's heart did not sink, and she continued to hope and trust in Jesus. She had vowed herself to him, and she was sure that he would defend her, because she was his own spouse. She knelt and prayed in her solitary chamber, while the jovial party in the banqueting room drank and feasted. At last they began to dance, and Aurelian was the merriest of them all, dancing and laughing with all his might, and rejoicing to think that he had at last conquered this proud Christian girl. But in a moment the merry scene changed. God struck Aurelian, and he fell down dead. Then there was a sudden cry of alarm, followed by a loud weeping and wailing, which ran through the house, and told Domitilla that our Lord had heard her prayer, and had delivered her from the great danger which had threatened her.

This was not, however, the end of all that Domitilla had to suffer for Jesus' sake. Luxorius, Aurelian's brother, was very angry with her, because he said that she had been the cause of his brother's death, and he accused her to Trajan, who at this time was emperor, and he got leave to question her, and put her to death if she would not sacrifice to the heathen gods. He came to Terracina, where she was living with two other young women, Theodora and Euphrosina, whom she had persuaded to become Christians and to vow themselves to a life of chastity. They were all three brought before Luxorius, who told them that the emperor had ordered them to sacrifice to the gods; and he advised them to obey at once, for, if they did not, he would put them to a cruel death. They refused to do so, and answered boldly and firmly to all he asked them about their religion. He knew there was little chance of making Domitilla change her mind, and, besides, he was not sorry to punish her for the death of his brother. So he ordered them all three to be shut up in a room, which was then set on fire, and thus they were burnt to death. The next morning Cesarius, a deacon, came to the place, and, on going to the room in which they had been shut up, he found them dead, lying on the floor on their faces, just as they had prostrated themselves in prayer, but without a hair of their head being singed or any part of their body being burned. The fire had released their souls from this mortal life, but it had been miraculously prevented from burning their bodies. Cesarius took up their bodies and buried them with great honor. The Church keeps the feast of St. Flavia Domitilla, together with that of SS. Nereus and Achilleus, on the 12th of May.

Now some one might say, "If all were to remain virgins, the human race would soon disappear from the earth."

Fear not lest all should be virgins. Jesus Christ said: "All take not this word, but they to whom it is given." (Matt. xix, 11.) Alas! the priests of the Catholic Church constantly inculcate the observance of the commandments of God, and yet how few are there that keep them! Now, if the number of those who neglect to do what is strictly commanded is excessively great, far greater still is the number of those who do not care to observe the counsels of the Gospel. Virginity is a hard thing, and, because it is hard, it is rare. There are many to whom God, out of his secret judgments, does not vouchsafe so great a benefit; others he calls to be partakers of it, yet they give no ear to his calling, but, charmed with the pleasures of this life, have no courage to free themselves from the nets in which they are entangled. And not only does the infirmity of man hinder this benefit from becoming universal, but it belongs also to the provident wisdom of Almighty God to have a care that there be always some to attend to posterity as long as the world is to last. He manifests his providence in watching over the very beasts and worms of the earth, preserving everything in kind as it was created. So, no man can fear that God will forsake mankind. Indeed, what young man did ever seek a wife and did not find one?

You say, "if all should remain virgins, the world would perish." Would to God that all would remain virgins! Heaven, the city of God, would much sooner be filled, and the end of the world hastened. Were it not better that *the kingdom of God were come*, which we daily beg, and that God were *all in all?* And if it should so happen that all should be chaste and lead a single life, it would be an evident sign of the will of God that the world should soon end. Truly, it could not come to a better end!

Not long ago, a certain virgin was about to consecrate herself to God. The devil was not slow to suggest to her:

"Think well, before the words are spoken,
The words thou canst ne'er more recall;
Vows made to God may not be broken,
Wilt thou leave friends and home and all?
Thou art still young and fair, so fair!
The world is bright and rich and gay,
And tender-loving hearts are there—
Wilt thou leave all to fade unseen away?"

The wise virgin answered:

"In prayers and tears the choice I've taken,
The choice I can ne'er ne'er regret;
The heartless world I've long forsaken,
Its nameless sorrows haunt me yet:
The worldling's aimless, dreary life;
Its mocking hopes and trembling fears,
Its envy, hate, and sickening strife,
Brief joys,—and then—an endless night of tears."

The devil again tempted her, and said:

"Behold! a bridegroom stands before thee,
So rich and young, so fond, so fair;
He vows he e'er shall love, adore thee,
He brings bright gems to deck thy hair:

Thou must brave scorn and want and woe,
  Must tread the thorny path of pain;
Thy freedom, too, thou must forego,
  If thou within these gloomy walls remain."

To this temptation the virgin replied:

"The Bridegroom of my soul is fairer,
  Than aught on earth or heaven beside;
He has bright gems, far richer, rarer,
  Than ocean caves or mountains hide:
For me in pain and shame He died,
  His pure love burns for me alway;
If here sharp thorns my pathway hide,
  On high I'll reign, 'mid light and bliss for aye.'

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